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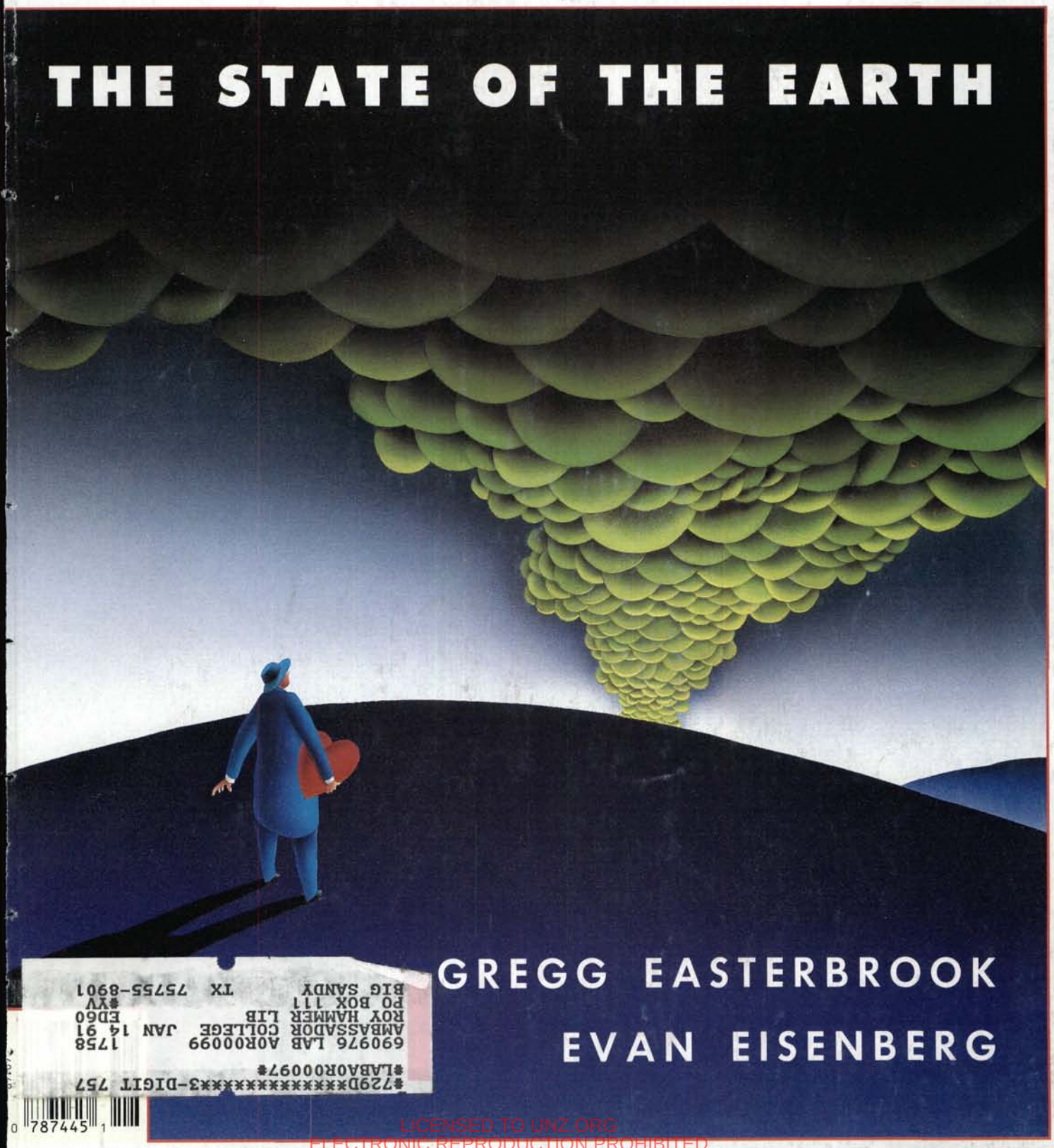
THE NEW REPUBLIC

Irving Howe on Malcolm Cowley · Hermione Lee on Philip Roth's 'Deception'



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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

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TRB FROM WASHINGTON

Regrets only

Although I have no special desire to be governor of Texas, and would actively prefer *not* to become head of the Office of Thrift Supervision (the poor soul charged with cleaning up the savings and loan mess), the traumas of aspirants to these posts in recent days compel me to make the following statement. It has been cleared with political consultants of both parties.

Like many members of my generation—Senator Al Gore and Representative Newt Gingrich, to name but two—I too have experimented with marijuana in the distant past.

It was in a party situation during my freshman year in college. Someone handed me a marijuana cigarette and I took a puff. Maybe two. I deeply regret this youthful indiscretion. I found the drug had no effect on me whatsoever, and I determined not to experiment with illicit substances any further. Instead, I got throwing-up drunk in a manner more suited to one with aspirations toward a leadership role in this great country of ours.

However, a few days later I experimented with marijuana once again. On that occasion I enjoyed it a good deal more. This youthful indiscretion I also deeply regret. During the next several years, overcome by the spirit of scientific inquiry, I experimented with marijuana perhaps 200 or more times. I am not sure of the exact number, but I do know that I deeply, deeply regret all of these youthful indiscretions.

As a law school student in the mid-1970s, I continued to conduct occasional experiments with marijuana—heedless of the baleful influence this apparently was having on impressionable members of the faculty such as Professor (later Judge) Douglas Ginsburg. Years afterward, in 1987, Ginsburg lost his chance to become a Supreme Court justice after it was revealed that he had smoked pot while teaching at that very law school. Although my law school experiments were few in number, I deeply regret each one of them.

Unlike the string of prominent Americans who have come forward lately to confess their dope experiences, I cannot pinpoint with the same remarkable clarity the last time I experimented with marijuana. Specifically, I cannot guarantee that it was in the "distant" past. All I can say for sure is that it was in the past, somewhat distant, that it was an indiscretion, somewhat less youthful, and that I deeply regret it.

These days my drug of choice is decaf. I drink it to forget. Knocks me right out. But if, perchance, I find myself experimenting with marijuana on some future occasion—which I won't until the law, or at least the zeitgeist, has changed; but if that should ever happen—it will be an elderly indiscretion, which I regret all the same. Deeply.

The 1960s are said to have been a period of cultural revolution, with marijuana playing a big part. Surely, though, the lesson we are learning as more and more prominent people come forward with tales of their "experiments" with marijuana is how little effect it all really had on the culture. The fact that nerds like Douglas Ginsburg (yes, or the author of this column), slick goody-goodies like Al Gore, and fast operators like Newt Gingrich all smoked dope shows both how widespread the phenomenon was and how little it mattered.

How little it mattered is a rebuke to marijuana's fans as well as its foes. Pot didn't stop Ginsburg from becoming a right-wing legal scholar or Gingrich from becoming House minority whip, which is hardly what Flower Power was supposed to lead to. On the other hand, it didn't leave Timothy Ryan unwilling or unable to tackle the S&L catastrophe. (Most people would have to be stoned to even consider taking on that assignment.) The Great Pot Experiment of the 1960s and 1970s produced millions of conventional, productive, upstanding citizens, plus a few journalists.

After Ginsburg fell, a lawyer friend of mine expressed dismay that "the only members of our generation who will get to run the country will be sanctimonious liars." I reassured him that this is true of every generation. But it appears now that Ginsburg was an aberration, a victim of temporary cultural confusion; on the marijuana question, out-and-out lying may not be necessary. Both President Bush and drug czar William Bennett have agreed that past pot-smoking should not disqualify someone from future high office. The revelation simply

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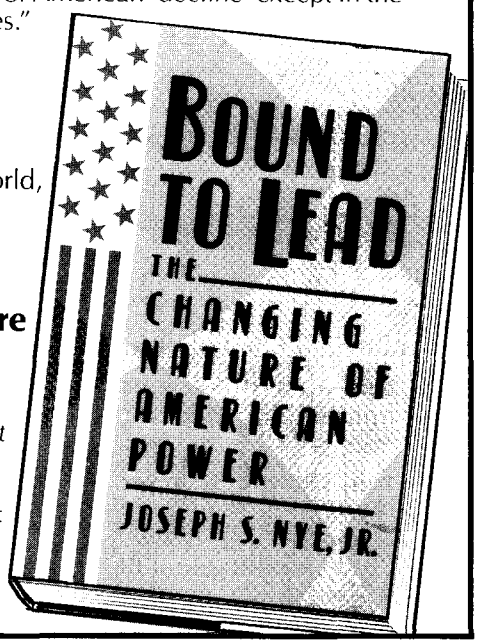

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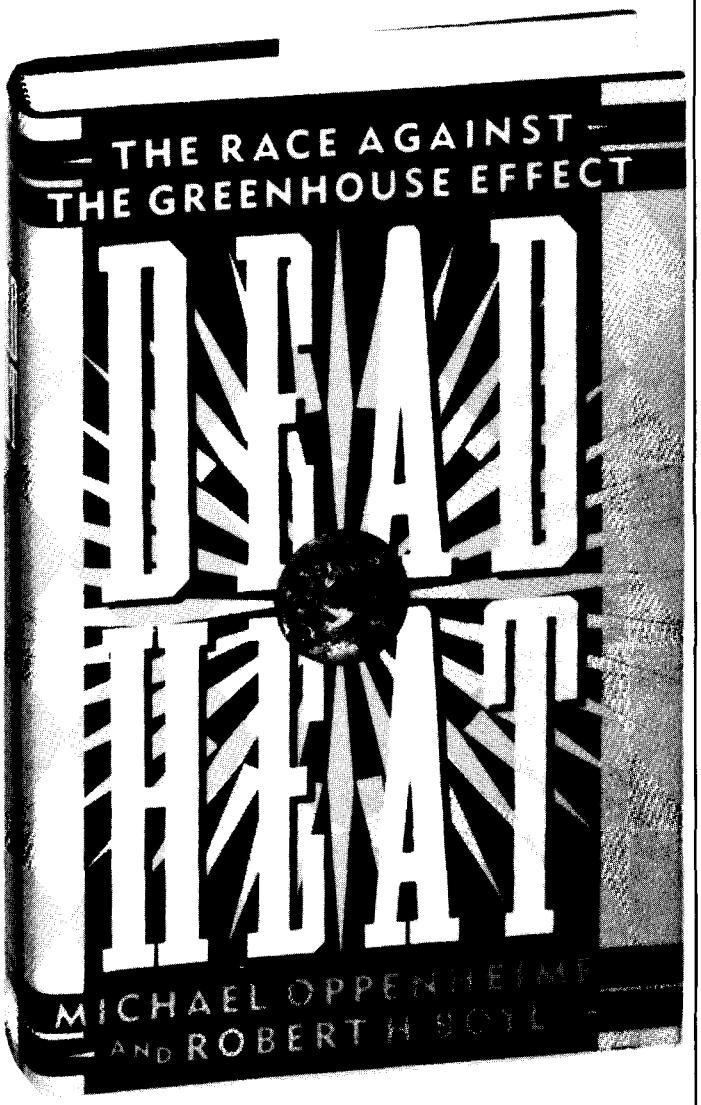

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CORRESPONDENCE

Violent reactions

To the editors:

Your criticism of the Sentencing Project ("One in Four," March 26) is on target, but your positive suggestions—Head Start, better education, and health care—though sound ideas, are only incidentally crime-fighting measures. Heaven help us and heaven help our cities if we must wait until they work their beneficent effects.

The most positive step we can take to fight crime is to change our drug policy. It is more than misguided: it rewards violence. Today's dealers stake out their territory, prevent employee theft, and intimidate informers by demonstrating their capacity for violence. A violent person can rise to the top of a drug gang and earn a fortune even if only for a short time.

But there is a second and equally important way that our drug policies encourage crime and violence. People must learn to handle the aggression and hostility in their environment. That used to include pushing, shoving, and fist fights. Today it means knives, guns, and wolf packs. Youngsters become violent in order to counter the violence they see around them. Philippe Bourgeois, who is doing an anthropological study of East Harlem, has concluded that drug violence is contagious—forcing everybody who wants to walk the street at night to demonstrate they can retaliate. As a result, new recruits enter the criminal world faster than we can arrest them.

A more realistic drug policy would allow less violent people to deal drugs or even allow legal establishments to deal. At a minimum, drug treatment centers ought to be permitted a range of services that include providing drugs to addicts. This one measure would drive a wedge between the addicts who form the army of street criminals and the dealers who live off the addicts' earnings. Prisons would return to their historic function of housing the violent.

NATHAN RILEY
Albany, New York

To the editors:

As the author of the recent report documenting that almost one in four black men in their twenties are under the control of the criminal justice system, I feel obligated to respond to "One in Four." First, you raise the point that the report comes from a source "not wholly disinterested." As a small organization with limited resources, we would have much preferred that the Justice Department or an academic institution had undertaken this study. Given the enormity of the problem we documented, it is surprising that this has not been done previously.

You argue that tripling the prison population since 1973 may have had an unknown significant impact on crime. Yet the literature on incapacitation, most notably a 1978 study by the National Academy of Sciences, shows this impact is relatively minimal. In order to achieve a ten percent reduction in crime, the NAS study concluded that New York would have had to increase its prison population by 263 percent and Massachusetts by 310 percent.

Although I am personally distressed that the goal of rehabilitation has been largely removed from our corrections system, this issue has been unfairly portrayed as a "criminals vs. victims" argument. If offenders, while in prison or serving an alternative sentence, are assisted in leading a legitimate lifestyle upon release, all of us as "potential victims" should be heartened.

Finally, you portray our report as arguing for criminal justice reforms at the expense of larger social policy changes. Our report, though, called for a dual approach to solving these problems, concluding that, along with changes in the criminal justice system, it is "time now to 'experiment' in crime control by attacking those social factors that many believe provide a more direct link to crime, such as unemployment, poverty, and substance abuse."

MARC MAUER
Washington, D.C.

The writer is assistant director of the Sentencing Project.

To the editors:

As an inmate in North Carolina's maximum security prison, I was very interested in "One in Four." According to the U.S. Justice Department's figures as well as other studies, the majority of inmates now housed in state and federal prisons were victims of one or more forms of child abuse, and most of them can be helped with such mental health treatment programs as assertiveness training, anger management, and group support programs. In many of these cases, the inmates have learned to suppress their anger until they can bear it no longer and explode into violence. Once their anger is released, they retreat back into a passive behavior as a method of coping.

Through training most people can learn to be properly assertive in their actions. However, due to the failure of the federal and state legislatures to provide funding for such programs for inmates, little is being done.

Yes, I totally agree that the street is the place to begin to solve the crime and drug and drop-out and teen pregnancy and a lot of other problems, but there must be programs to help teach the present inmates of our prisons how to exist in the real world when they are again released into society.

DAVID ELLIS
Raleigh, North Carolina

Balance of politics

To the editors:

Charles Krauthammer writes in "The German Revival" (March 26) that Western Europe developed "transnational institutions, most notably the European Community" in order not to risk "the national explosions that follow almost universally—in our time, in Asia and Africa—whenever the imperial power withdraws."

But surely there would be no likelihood of war among France, Italy, the Netherlands, Great Britain, etc., even in the absence of the European Community. That transnational institution, as well as others, is not the cause of the peaceful relations among these countries. On the contrary, it is itself the consequence of the non-belligerent character of these countries, which is rooted in their liberal democratic political institutions. Krauthammer is right when he points out the instability of the "balance-of-power system" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But he is wrong in not seeing that the post-cold war balance-of-power system now in the making has much greater chances of success. Its participants are countries that have their own internal system of liberal democratic balances (and checks) on power, capable of containing aggressive militarism.

ALEKSA DJILAS
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mythical majority

To the editors:

Your Notebook comment that Jesse Jackson "prefers statehood for D.C., so he can become a senator without trying" (March 26) points to an important flaw in our form of democracy: a lack of proportional representation in Congress. Rather than being a subject of snide remarks, Jackson's political status should demonstrate why we need to rethink one of our fundamental assumptions about how democracy should work.

Jackson gained the allegiance of many white voters in his 1988 run for presidency, but his base clearly was in the black community. Yet even though he is with-

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 30, 1990

PROTECTION RACKET

Within the tentative trade agreement just struck between the United States and Japan lies a fairly disturbing comment on America's mental health. Among the promises made by the Japanese government is that it will shorten the work week for its employees and encourage private companies to do the same for theirs. Now, the whole idea behind trade talks with Japan—as articulated by U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills and a number of congressmen—is that in large part the trade gap between the two nations results not from Japanese industriousness but from Japanese unfairness. So it is a little odd for Hills to emerge from the talks and proudly declare that the Japanese have agreed to become less industrious. But apparently it has come to this. America is so insecure about its global economic status that it now unabashedly asks other nations if they can lend a hand by tying one behind their backs. Well, look at the bright side: at least this episode helps strip the pretense of piety from the bipartisan chorus of political opportunists urging the United States to "get tough" with Japan.

More specifically, it highlights a strain of neo-protectionism that seems to be creeping into American trade policy. This trade pact is among the first products of the Bush administration's "structural impediments initiative" (SII). The idea here is that protectionism is more than skin deep: Japan impedes trade not merely through tariffs and quotas, but via subtler, culturally ingrained barriers. This premise is undeniably on target: subtle trade barriers do abound in Japan, and lowering them should appeal to any earnest champion of free trade. But to categorize long work weeks as one such "structural impediment" is to betray a less noble goal: not to free world trade but simply to cut the U.S. trade deficit, whether by boosting American exports or stifling imports.

This sort of indiscriminate emphasis on the bottom line is a close relative of the currently voguish idea of "managed trade"—a simple agreement between nations to keep their imports and exports at agreed-upon, politically palatable levels. Hills claims to oppose managed trade, but the deal she has forged with Japan makes it hard to see why she would. How fundamental is the difference between a Japanese vow to reduce its exports and a Japanese vow to work less hard? Or the difference between a Japanese pledge to raise imports from the United States and a Japanese pledge (also a part of the SII deal) to raise government spending—not because the Japanese government especially wants to build more roads and such, but because building roads and such is known to draw heavily on American imports? In the end, all of these approaches amount to fighting protectionism with protectionism. They don't expose Japanese companies to untrammeled competition, but rather coddle American companies.

Even in its purer, more principled form, SII is problematic. The textbook example of a "structural" impediment is the Japanese law permitting neighborhood shopkeepers to forestall the coming of larger, cheaper retailers—which are often more open to American goods, and are sometimes (as in the well-publicized Toys 'R' Us case) American in ownership. The SII pact includes a Japanese promise to reform these laws. This reform, unlike the Japanese vow of future sloth, would have the welcome effect of raising the material well-being of both Japanese (consumers) and Americans (producers). Still, it presumes an easy answer to hard questions. Discrimination against Toys 'R' Us is at root a social policy—aimed at protecting small stores from large-scale competition, whether foreign or domestic—that has the side effect of dampening trade. Should this or any other Japanese social policy be shaped by Hills? Before answering, put the shoe on the other foot. The subsidized loans handed out by the U.S. Small Business Administration marginally handicap large foreign (and

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domestic) competitors. Does that mean the fate of the SBA should be a subject of international negotiation? We don't recall Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, one of America's most rhetorically gifted protectionists, ever interrupting his tirades against Japanese trade barriers to call for the death of the SBA. We do recall him loudly endorsing various farm subsidies, some of which undoubtedly penalize foreign farmers (and all of which can be rationalized with just the sort of maudlin evocations of a bygone era that are used by the Japanese shopkeeper lobby).

Yes, yes, Japan is on balance more protectionist, "structurally" and otherwise, than the United States. But the question remains: Where exactly is the line between the legitimate pursuit of free trade and unwarranted meddling in foreigners' affairs?

To begin with, don't imagine that the line can be neatly drawn between avowedly and incidentally ("structurally") protectionist policies. Even plain, old-fashioned trade barriers—American sugar quotas, the Japanese ban on rice imports—are at their core social policies, designed to benefit particular interest groups or ways of life. When Japan recently agreed to grant American access to its supercomputer market—in response not to SII but to the threat of retaliation under the "Super 301" provision of the 1988 trade bill—it was in effect tailoring a social policy to U.S. demands.

Faced with this inseparability of trade policy and domestic policy, we are tempted to condemn all meddling—i.e., all trade negotiations—and repeat the familiar (and true) refrain that Japanese protectionism hurts Japanese consumers at least as much as American producers: If Japan wants to so sharply skew its energies away from consumption, and bear the attendant pain, who are we to stop it? The trouble with espousing this blanket ban on hardball trade talks is that we secretly enjoy their fruits. When fear of reprisal leads Japan to open the door to American supercomputer companies, or to Toys 'R' Us, we feel, at one level, slightly more sanguine about the world's economic future (just as we would if the United States could be bullied into ending sugar quotas). This puts us in the awkward position of the sanctimonious sheriff who condemns vigilantism and frets about its toll on individual rights, but rather likes its contribution to social order. All the yahoo Japan bashers in Congress are nauseating and frightening in their savvy use of latent American racism, but this very scariness does often succeed in liberating trade. It is always tempting to endorse rough justice so long as it doesn't get too rough.

The question is whether we can ensure that it won't—that hardball tactics won't incite a trade war. And if so, how? The closest thing to a good answer comes in the form of three tips for the makers of American trade policy. (1) Try to confine your wrath mainly to simple, overt forms of protection. Again, it isn't that tariffs and quotas are necessarily more pernicious than Toys 'R' Us-type barriers. Rather, it's that their overtness, their transparent unfairness, gives your indictment of them an appealing and formidable simplicity. It is hard for Japan, or any other signatory of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades, to get too indignant in defense of blatant trade impediments. (2) Speaking of GATT: try to confine the dialogue to forums conducive to a high degree of civility. Multilateral GATT talks, in particular, provide an august rubric and a safely low profile. Low-key bilateral negotiations can be similarly unthreatening. But a law such as Super 301, with its dramatic ritual of publicly naming unfair traders, provides a week-long excuse for congressional posturing and incites untold Japanese ill will. SII, as some news broadcasts of early April showed, similarly provides a soapbox for demagogues. (3) Be sensitive to political context. Japan is now undergoing a crisis of economic and political confidence that has left Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu precariously perched. He wants to win the favor of Japanese consumers with the lower prices that free trade brings, even though this means antagonizing special interests. His political success is thus in the interest of the United States. Yet owing to Japan's current insecurity, which (like America's) sometimes borders on paranoia, his influence erodes when he is perceived as slavishly following the American line. By their very prominence, then, SII and Super 301 make it hard for him to do the right thing.

In short, now is a dangerous time to be playing hardball with Japan, and SII and Super 301 are especially dangerous forms of hardball. Besides, look at the meager rewards in whose name these risks are being incurred. No more than $10 billion of the $50 billion U.S.-Japan trade gap can be chalked up to Japanese protectionism, and less than half of that could be erased through concessions that are politically feasible in Japan. So if tip (1) above means that Japan's many "structural" trade barriers go unexpunged, this won't wreck the American economy.

The dangers of rising trade tension extend beyond a possible trade war, and even beyond economics. In a post-cold war world, the United States occupies a pivotal position. It stands smack in the middle of a chain of mostly capitalist, mostly democratic nations spanning three-fourths of the Northern Hemisphere, from Warsaw to Taipei. It dominates one of three regional economic blocs that together constitute the modern global economy. It remains the world's most powerful nation, economically and militarily, and for this and other reasons it is easily the most formidable guardian of the political and economic values that triumphed globally in the 1980s. America, in short, stands at the heart of a loosely coherent body of like-minded nations that have the power collectively to foster the evolution of humane and productive governments worldwide. To the extent that U.S. relations with Europe to the east, and Japan to the west, remain strong, the prospects for the world will look tolerably bright. To the extent, on the other hand, that American politicians who should know better keep stirring up antagonism between the two great Pacific powers, these prospects will look less bright.

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NOTEBOOK

RECONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM: For many years one of the most glaring and obvious empty spaces in our political and cultural life has been the one that should be occupied by a general magazine of high intellectual and literary quality that offers a forum for uninhibited commentary on black American politics, culture, and society. *Reconstruction* shows every sign of being up to the task of filling that empty space. The first issue of this handsome new magazine includes William H. Simon's searching and critical meditation on affirmative action, Peggy Davis's essay-review of Leon Dash's book on teenage pregnancy, and a tough assessment of the career of John H. Johnson, the founder of *Ebony* magazine, by *Reconstruction*'s own founder and editor, Randall Kennedy, a professor at Harvard Law School. *Reconstruction* has been launched as a quarterly, with plans to turn it eventually into a bimonthly—an African American answer to *Dissent* and *Commentary* and *Tikkun* and *The American Prospect* and the rest. One of the many things we admire about *Reconstruction* is the fact that Kennedy didn't spend years writing prospectuses, raising funds, holding meetings, etc.; he just went ahead and (with the help of a few volunteer law students) got out a magazine, and a good one at that. Subscriptions are $25 a year ($40 for libraries) from *Reconstruction*, 1563 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

BRYANT GUMBEL 1, G. W. F. HEGEL 0: In a *New York Times Magazine* piece about the black scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr., his former colleague Jonathan Culler, semiotician extraordinaire of Cornell University, explained Gates's appeal: "Desire is always mediated desire. The fact that he is visible in the media reinforces his desirability within the universities. . . ."

THE NIXON WATCH: "George Bush has a benign attitude on culture, forgetting Richard Nixon's profound warning in one of his taped Oval Office conversations to stay away from 'the arts' " (Evans and Novak, *The Washington Post*, April 11). The exact, profound quote—to daughter Tricia—was: "The arts you know, they're Jews, they're left wing—in other words, stay away."

YIPPY FOR FREEDOM: Surely we are not alone in the worry that Eastern Europe is being invaded by the worst of the West along with the best of the West. As the threat of communism recedes, the threat of cuteness mounts. This week we note the arrival in our office of the CADDY Bulletin. CADDY stands for Committee to Aid Democratic Dissidents in Yugoslavia. Really, it does. We await the appearance of the countervailing DADDY (Despots Against Democratic Dissidents in Yugoslavia). And to the north, perhaps HAPPY (Hungarians in Aid of Progressive Principles and Youth), and DIPPY (Dentists in Poland Protest by Yelling).

MOST KIDDING ASIDE: We apologize for making light of Lee Atwater's illness (Notebook, April 9), which turns out to be more serious than anyone originally thought. Our objections to the campaign he managed for George Bush stand, but we sincerely wish him well in his struggle for health. And Lee's brand of political skeet shooting doesn't look so bad now that—in the hands of lesser Republican operatives—it has finally found some appropriate targets. Here's what's happening: Roger Ailes and Roger Stone are giving up on candidates altogether and are going after each other instead. Roger A. calls Roger S., whose firm now and then breaks ranks to represent a Democrat, "a press nymphomaniac" who can't get enough of seeing himself quoted in the media. "He didn't get hugged enough as a child, but then if you look at him, who the hell would hug him?" says Roger A. of Roger S. One of S.'s partners responds by calling A. "the fat man" and a "loser." Get well, Lee. Your party needs your comparative decency and intelligence. •

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HOSTAGE BAZAAR

By Martin Kramer

An editorial in *The Tehran Times* of February 22 set off the latest wave of expectation. "Muslim forces," it declared, "should work to get the hostages free with no precondition." *The Tehran Times* is the mouthpiece of Iran's president, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, and Rafsanjani is the target of President Bush's repeated declarations that "goodwill begets goodwill." Iran's "goodwill" translates into the release of American hostages in Lebanon. The "goodwill" of the United States means the lifting of trade embargoes and a new beginning in Iranian-American relations. Administration officials may have the makings of a deal.

But no freed Americans have yet winced at bright camera lights in Damascus and Wiesbaden. In an unrelated development, Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal surrendered three of his European hostages. But Rafsanja-

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ni has delivered only more editorials, all promising to use Iran's leverage with the Shiite groups that hold the Americans. The hitch: any understanding reached in the back channels of U.S.-Iranian diplomacy must now get through the rubbled back alleys of Beirut's southern suburbs, where the hostages are kept. Their keepers have some leverage of their own, and the real bargaining has only just begun.

There are three clusters of American hostages held in Lebanon. Each cluster is held by a Shiite group that makes claims under a distinct name; each name is associated with a different logic for hostage-holding. There is a question about whether the three groups are completely separate, since all are affiliated with Hezbollah, the larger Shiite movement backed by Iran. But there are certainly three distinct Lebanese arguments for keeping foreigners in leg irons. Before Rafsanjani can deliver the American hostages, he will have to defeat them all.

Islamic Jihad is the most veteran of the hostage-holding networks. The group originally rested upon the planning genius of Imad Mughniyya, a Shiite from South Lebanon, and the bomb-making skills of his cousin. Together they are believed by some analysts to have carried off the suicide bombings against American and French targets in 1983. In those glorious days Islamic Jihad had no private agenda but simply served Iran's Islamic revolution and Hezbollah.

But at the end of 1983, Kuwaiti authorities captured the bomb-making cousin and a group of co-conspirators, following a failed attempt to blow up the American and French embassies. Mughniyya's cousin was sentenced to death by a Kuwaiti court, along with two other Shiites. Another fourteen defendants drew prison sentences. Since that time Islamic Jihad has devoted much of its energy to freeing those on Kuwait's death row. Islamic Jihad knew that the Emir of Kuwait would never surrender to a gang of schismatic Shiites on his own accord. But it did believe him to be an agent of the United States, who would slavishly do America's bidding. Islamic Jihad therefore took Americans in Lebanon as hostages and held them against the lives of the condemned Shiites in Kuwait. Sure enough, the Emir didn't free the convicted men, but he did refrain from giving the regal nod to the executions.

Through all of this, Islamic Jihad dutifully worked hand in hand with Iran. When foreign hostages were easy to come by—before the Syrian deployment in West Beirut in 1987—Islamic Jihad periodically seized Americans and Frenchmen as a favor to Iran. Iran then spent them for French financial concessions and U.S. arms. But Islamic Jihad prudently insisted upon keeping at least two Americans as a guarantee against the mistreatment or execution of the Shiites held in Kuwait, and as a bargaining chip for their eventual release. That's what thwarted the Iran mission of Robert McFarlane and Oliver North. And that's why Islamic Jihad still clings to Terry Anderson and Thomas Sutherland, both taken in 1985. (By keeping two hostages in separate places, Islamic Jihad can't be put out of business by the sudden discovery or death of one hostage.)

Of all the bands of hostage-holders, Islamic Jihad has the most intimate tie to Iran, but Iran also owes it the most. While the Gulf War lasted, it did noble service as an Iranian fifth column, both in Lebanon and Kuwait. In addition to Islamic Jihad's claim on Iranian gratitude, it holds the blue chip hostage. Anderson is the longest-suffering captive and a journalist who had legitimate business in Lebanon. His sister and fellow journalists have made him into a *cause célèbre*, and he commands the lion's share of sympathy for the hostages.

Islamic Jihad won't simply give away this prize, and for good cause. Although the Emir of Kuwait may have decided not to order the execution of the condemned "brethren," Islamic Jihad believes the release of its hostages might tempt him. So Rafsanjani must secure concessions from Kuwait, involving either the release of the condemned Shiites or a commutation of their death sentences. Failing that, Rafsanjani must persuade Islamic Jihad that he has found a more effective method for helping "the brethren" in Kuwait than the holding of American hostages. Gaining an explicit Kuwaiti concession will be tough, and getting the hostages without one will be tougher. Still, it is noteworthy that Islamic Jihad kept silent throughout the latest round of hostage speculation, and its most overt apologist in Hezbollah has hinted cryptically at progress. If there has been movement, it has probably been here.

A second cluster of American hostages is held by the Revolutionary Justice Organization. Its three Americans—Joseph Cicippio, Edward Tracy, and (in all likelihood) Frank Reed—were seized in the fall of 1986, just when Islamic Jihad seemed likely to trade away all its Americans. The logic of the Revolutionary Justice Organization holds that the very presence of American hostages has shielded the Shiite suburbs against hostile aggression. It would be folly to trade them all off for American arms, economic concessions to Iran, or Shiite detainees. Once the last American hostage goes free, what will prevent the Syrians, with American blessing and Saudi financial backing, from quashing Hezbollah in Beirut's Shiite suburbs? What will keep American agents and Israeli bombers from coming back to wreak vengeance? What will prevent a new Sabra and Shatila, this time perpetrated against Shiites?

Many of Hezbollah's Iranian backers have asked themselves the same questions and have sanctioned the Revolutionary Justice Organization. The group held other hostages—Frenchmen who were traded away by Iran, and other foreigners who were sold for cash. But Americans are talismans too precious to be bartered away, and the Revolutionary Justice Organization has made no systematic demands for their re-

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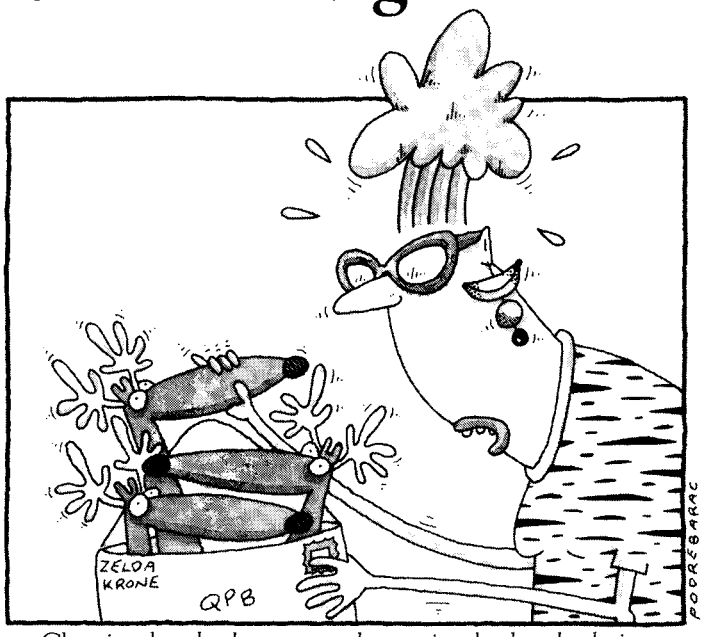

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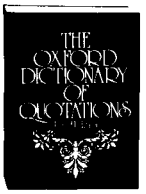

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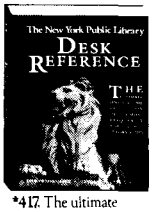

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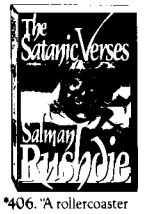

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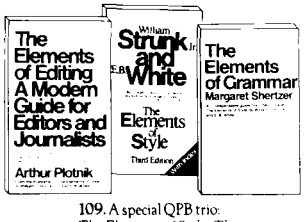
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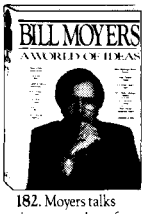

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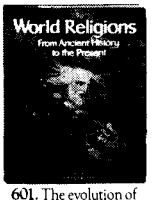

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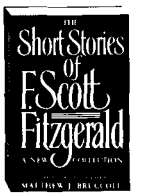

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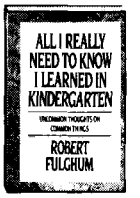

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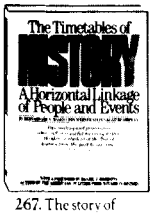

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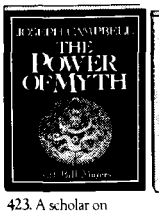

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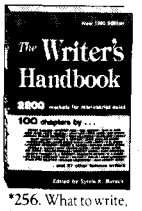

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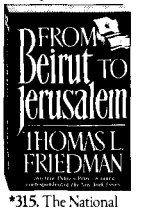

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lease. Instead, the Americans are threatened with death whenever the United States (or its "agents," such as Israel) seems poised to strike the Muslims of Lebanon.

To effect the release of these three, Rafsanjani has to convince the Revolutionary Justice Organization that its logic is flawed—that by holding American hostages, the group has tightened the Syrian noose around the Shiite suburbs, where Syrian forces now man checkpoints. The argument is a bit tortured, for though it may be true to a point, it may also be true that hostages *are* the best guarantee for the survival of their captors. Rafsanjani is arguing that less tangible guarantees—from the Syrians, of all people—will do almost as well. Presented with this argument, the Revolutionary Justice Organization tried to burst the latest bubble of hostage talk with an angry statement rejecting any release. Rafsanjani has only begun to undermine this rationale, which is also echoed by Hezbollah's hard-line Iranian patron, former Interior Minister Ali Akbar Mohtashemi. "Freedom for the hostages," he maintains, "means breaking the chains of bloodthirsty wolves."

The third cluster of Americans is held by the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine. Its captives are three American educators, taken together in January 1987: Robert Polhill, Alann Steen, and Jesse Turner. The logic here recalls that of Islamic Jihad: take Americans hostage in order to force the hand of a third party holding Shiite detainees. In this case the third party is Israel: Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine proposes to exchange the three Americans for some 300 Shiites held in a prison camp run by the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army. In an act of solidarity, the group has also added Palestinians imprisoned by Israel to its wish list. The group looks to the precedent of the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847 to Beirut—a crisis resolved when Israel agreed to release more than 700 Shiite detainees to gain freedom for the American passengers. If it isn't too late to reenact the triumphs of the seventh century, why not those of 1985?

But the deal proposed by the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine simply will not fly. When Israel released Shiite detainees for the hijacked Americans, Shiite fundamentalists held no Israelis. Now they do; as many as three Israeli servicemen are held by Hezbollah. They are the only key to the prison gates in South Lebanon and the cell door of Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid, the Hezbollah cleric whom Israelis abducted last summer. Nor are the three American professors the moral equivalent of the TWA passengers. By the time they were abducted, these foolish souls had been warned many times to get out of harm's way and leave Muslim Beirut. Their plight has stirred more incredulity than sympathy among most Americans. In the unregulated market of hostage-trading, the three educators are junk bonds. Their value is uncertain, and is probably a good deal less than their owners think. Still, the United States has made it clear to Rafsanjani that "goodwill" can flow only after *all* of the American hostages are out; they must be worth something.

But their market value will become clear only after Israeli soldiers are swapped for Shiite detainees. Until then, the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine cannot be seen to have abandoned the Shiite "strugglers" who languish in Israeli captivity. The group's latest statement still demands an "exchange." But when Israel does its deal for its soldiers, the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine won't throw in the three professors as a bonus for Israel. At that point, the group's most logical tack would be to shift gears and offer its hostages in return for getting Hezbollah back into South Lebanon.

That may prove to be the most drawn-out negotiation of all. A year after the three wayward profs were spirited away, the rival Shiite Amal movement, with the backing of Syria, drove Hezbollah from its redoubts in the South. Since then, lots of bad blood has been spilled in internecine feuding. Some 3,000 Hezbollah sympathizers have been chased out of the South and are now demanding to go back. Their purpose, they declare, is not to displace Amal, but to prosecute their sacred struggle—their jihad—against Israel. If the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine tied the release of the three professors to Hezbollah's return to the South, it could strike a heroic pose, and perhaps salvage a return on its hostages. But Rafsanjani would have to do a difficult deal with the Syrians and the Amal movement to allow Hezbollah's descent southward. The basis of that agreement—the so-called Damascus Accord—exists only on paper. Iran will have to subsidize its implementation with favors and straightforward payoffs.

Shiite hostage-holders and Syrian presidents don't get taken to the cleaners. Doing deals with them is bound to be punishing and protracted. Nor can Rafsanjani expect unanimous support at home for his efforts. Some domestic opponents who reject any reconciliation with the Great Satan are demanding that he bow out and let the hostage-holders choose their own course. Other critics are actively urging the hostage-holders to swallow their keys. Rafsanjani is playing three-dimensional chess with a dozen boards, and a mistake on any one of them could ruin his game.

But Rafsanjani draws upon a deep reservoir of *zerangi*, that manipulative guile raised to an art in Persian politics. He also knows how to issue veiled

COMING:

Mickey Kaus

on a new strategy

for liberals

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threats and make elusive promises. The hostage-holders need Iran's protection; the Syrians want that cut-rate Iranian oil. Improved leverage has made Rafsanjani show (or feign) new optimism about his ability to bring the hostages out. The latest word from his camp followers puts the target date for release of all the hostages at the end of 1990, and suggests that they might be released in "stages" during the year. Each stage might well be the release of one of the clusters described above.

But there is always "Factor X": fidgeting by the Bush administration while Arabs and Persians practice their traditional art of commerce. This is not Eastern Europe. Middle Eastern history isn't on fast-forward, but advances frame by frame. A lot of patient work has created incentives without compromising principles, setting Iran's president in slow motion. But the "hostage process" can always be arrested by some gaffe akin to the East Jerusalem debacle. Note how Bush took a needless risk by boasting of the amazing things he is doing behind the scenes to effect a hostage release. That hardly helps to convince the hostage-holders that the United States has made its final offer. Thankfully, Bush's attempted phone call to Rafsanjani went straight to a hoaxer. Who knows what new misunderstandings might have arisen? Persia's head of state cannot help wondering what stirs this inscrutable Occidental.

MARTIN KRAMER is a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C., where he is writing a book on Hezbollah.

The sound bite on the Mount.

FAX VOBISCUM

By Andrew Sullivan

"The nation's Roman Catholic bishops announced yesterday that they have engaged a major public relations firm and a politically connected polling concern in Washington . . ." —*The New York Times*, April 6, 1990

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HILLTOP RALLY CALLED TURNING POINT
AS NAZARENE TURNS TABLES ON PHARISEES

JERUSALEM, PASSOVER EVE, A.D. 33—In a daring move to reinvigorate his dark-horse campaign for the Kingship of the Jews, the Rev. Jesus Christ acted decisively today to shift the debate to a higher level.

Speaking on a suburban hilltop in the Roman-occupied West Bank, the Bethlehem-born prophet set out a series of new campaign themes designed to broaden his support beyond his artisan-class base of carpenters and fishermen. He made a special appeal for the all-important "meek" vote, promising members of this key constituency that their long-term real estate prospects would fare well under a Jesus administration.

In his Mount remarks, Mr. Christ also praised those in this troubled region who support the peace process. Turning to ethics issues, he pooh-poohed the conventional wisdom that calls for responding to every negative spot with another negative spot. Instead, he recommended a positive policy toward enemies, warning against getting into face-slapping contests that can lead to a cycle of violence. He added that his supporters should not be concerned about matching funds since an anonymous benefactor has promised indefinite backing.

In what was seen as a distancing of himself from the incumbent Pharisaic leadership, Mr. Christ called for renewed efforts on behalf of the poor, the pure in heart, the recently bereaved, the oppressed, and other interest groups targeted by Wirthlin Group polling data.

Sources close to the Father, who spoke, as usual, on very deep background, described the speech as "inspired." Hilltop exit polls indicated that it is likely to give an added boost to Mr. Christ's recent surge in opinion surveys, which began with a highly successful water-into-wine photo opportunity in Cana.

Few area prophets have made a more dazzling impression in first-century Palestine than this earnest, bearded figure, who speaks fluent Aramaic and has demonstrated strong appeal not only among Israelites but also among Samaritans and other ethnics. At each campaign stop the crowds have multiplied, as have the fishes. Acclaimed by such distinguished scribes as Georgius F. Willius in *Jewsweek* ("a combination of Cicero and Mithras"), Wilhelmus Safir in *The Old Rome Times* ("a moderate we can deal with"), and Davidus Broderius in *The Jericho Post* ("the real spokesman for the A.D. thirtysomething generation"), Mr. Christ's campaign looks set to be transfigured. "Anyone who thinks this guy's a kook is laboring under an immaculate misconception," said one prophecy analyst who spoke on condition that he not be beatified.

Senior officials at the court of King Herod, however, discounted the Nazareth-based ex-carpenter's rise in the polls, saying Mr. Christ would need a "miracle" to carry Jerusalem. Close allies of the Kingship hopeful, though, said this would be "no problem" and that three days is a long time in messianics.

For press kits, epistles, and further information on the man Populus *magazine calls "the sexiest man since John the Baptist," contact Paul at our Jerusalem office, or call toll-free* 1-800-GALILEE *and ask for Judas.*

ANDREW SULLIVAN is a former TNR associate editor.

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A liberal skeptic's guide to Earth Day.

EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT IS WRONG

By Gregg Easterbrook

The air and water are getting cleaner, not dirtier. Acid rain may be preventing global warming. Smog protects you from ozone depletion. Family farmers dump more chemicals than toxic waste sites. The "poisoning of America" is already over. Nature kills more species than humanity. The Third World is a greater threat to the ecology than the West. Some environmentalists actually long for the environment to get worse. Some business leaders want it to get better. OK, OK. That last taxes credence, though occasionally it's true. All the others are bang-on actual.

As Earth Day approaches there is a growing sense that the only socially respectable attitude toward the environment is pushing the panic button. Fashionable alarmism may eventually create a Chicken Little backlash: as the years pass and nature doesn't end, people may stop listening when environmentalists issue warnings. The tough-minded case for environmental protection is ultimately more persuasive than the folk song and flowers approach. For liberals, being tough-minded means shedding some cherished preconceived notions, but it also means creating more rigorous arguments in favor of ecological respect as a human value, and, perhaps, of pointing the way toward finding humankind a constructive role in creation's scheme. Herewith a guide to what's really going on in the environment.

ACID RAIN After a decade of Reaganesque mumbling about further study and congressional Democratic stalling, action finally seems assured. (Democrats stalled because the high-sulfur coals that are the chief cause of acid rain come from underground mines staffed by the United Mine Workers; low-sulfur coals come mainly from non-union surface mines in the West.) The new Clean Air Act will reduce national sulfur dioxide emissions by about half and cut a related acid rain source, nitrogen oxide. Probably it will include a "cap" mandating that no matter how much future electricity production grows, total acid rain emissions may never exceed the new (reduced) level. This provision, brainchild of Environmental Protection Agency administrator William Reilly, is a far-reaching barrier against future new pollution.

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Little-known note: in the past fifteen years national sulfur dioxide emissions have already fallen by about one-quarter even as coal use increased nearly fifty percent, owing to controls under the old Clean Air Act and to the construction of new power plants with superior technology. Second note: recent studies, including a ten-year, $500 million federal project, show acid rain effects to be considerably less than theory predicts. Only high-altitude red spruce trees, not forests generally, so far display acid rain damage; and though some enviros projected that a majority of Eastern U.S. lakes would by now be too acidic for most life, the federal study found that only four percent have crossed this threshold. Conservative critics interpret such studies as proving acid rain is no big deal. Four percent lifelessness no big deal?

ASBESTOS An example of sacrificing complexities when they get in the way of a good outrage. Studies show that workplace exposure to airborne fibers is very dangerous; that justifies cessation of production. But the larger questions of whether asbestos in place does any harm, and whether ripping it out actually creates a health risk, are neither simple nor bad news, and so are largely overlooked. *Science* recently published a paper detailing an asbestos risk study by an international team of experts. They concluded that asbestos in tiles or insulation is statistically harmless; in schools it would cause at most one death in 10 million children.

Yet thanks to front-page treatment of asbestos fear—given great play in the early 1980s when studies were preliminary—there is a 1987 federal law requiring that asbestos be ripped out of public buildings. This causes fibers to become airborne, exposing workers to the one aspect of asbestos that truly is dangerous. The cost? EPA estimates $55 billion. Fifty-five billion dollars to save one life in 10 million? Aren't there far more promising public health investments?

CLEAN AIR ACT Currently slouching toward passage in Congress, this revision of a 1970 law is the most important environmental legislation since Superfund in 1980. The bill will reduce smog from cars, trucks, and other

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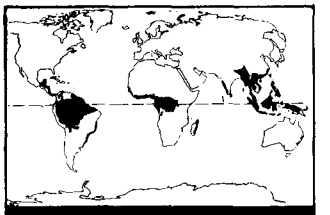
AND ON THE EIGHTH DAY, WE BULLDOZED IT.

The oldest rainforests date back to the dinosaurs, 100 million years. Today they offer the last refuge for half of all plant and animal species on earth.

But how much time do rainforests have left? Millions of acres have been bulldozed and burned. Unless we act now, the last traces of original, irreplaceable paradise will vanish in a single human lifespan.

A miracle of creation will be wiped out, thousands of species doomed to extinction. And nobody will gain.



50,000 acres a day are lost worldwide.

Rainforest soils are too shallow for agriculture, their complex ecology too fragile for humans to exploit without turning our planet's richest natural regions into eroded wastelands. Short of sustainable uses, leaving the rainforests alone would be the most promising development.

What can you do to save the rainforests?

You can support activist organizations in a dozen nations compaigning to conserve the splendid variety of living things which depend on these endangered environments.

Elusive jaguars, rarest orchids, colorful birds of paradise. And the latest arrivals on the scene: the children of humankind.

Save the rainforests and safeguard the survival of half of the species on earth, including our own.
Here's my donation of ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $75 ☐ $100 ☐ _____

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sources, as well as acid rain and toxic air emissions from factories.

Conservatives, Republicans, and retro Democrats such as Michigan's John Dingell have long resisted an air pollution crackdown. Industrial lobbyists actually are complaining on Capitol Hill about being "steamrolled" by environmentalists, a group with perhaps a billionth of their money clout. Industry's Clean Air Working Group has issued the obligatory cries of wolf: up to 1 million jobs lost, another 2 million "at risk." Precedent suggests it will be amazing if the actual number of jobs lost is six. Environmental legislation often causes business disruptions, but to my knowledge no economist has ever demonstrated net job loss. After all, jobs are created when new anti-pollution hardware is built; and new low-sulfur mining jobs will open when high-sulfur employment declines as a result of acid rain provisions. It's possible that by pushing industry for more innovation in environmental controls, the new act will do the business sector a favor, putting it in a position to market clean technology to the rest of the world.

When House-Senate differences are worked out, the law should cut the typical new car's pollution to two percent of that emitted by 1970 models; extend auto emission controls to trucks; cut acid rain by half; and reduce industrial toxic air emissions by about three-quarters. Basically, it's a great piece of legislation.

That hasn't stopped many of the good guys from denouncing it. They're angry that amendments aimed at pushing cars down to one percent of 1970 pollution failed. (Many engineers think two percent is the technological limit for gasoline engines.) They're angry that the act may delete federal authority to seize control of environmental planning in cities ignoring smog reduction deadlines. (Such power has been on the books for years but almost never used; and as adamant as enviros are that the power be maintained, conservatives have been adamant that it be expunged. Why either side cares so passionately about an empty threat is hard to fathom.) They're angry that the Senate dropped a 40 mpg auto standard, promoted as a way to slow global warming by cutting carbon dioxide emissions from cars.

And enviros are especially mad about one of the most obscure aspects of the legislation, a "second stage" test for air toxics. All sides have agreed that industry will first be required to install "best available technology" controls on its smokestacks, which is expected to cut airborne toxics by seventy-five percent. Afterward there will be studies of any residual risks posed by remaining emissions. Industry wanted an acceptable residual risk to be an additional one-in-10,000 chance of cancer in the factory community; enviros wanted the risk to be one in 1 million for a hypothetical person living his entire life at the factory gate. The latter would have in effect forced toxic emissions to zero. This is actually a good idea for the future. (See ZERO EMISSIONS.) But the notion is sufficiently controversial today that the entire bill almost collapsed over it. The fight was a low point for enviro credibility. If toxic air pollution constitutes an imminent health threat, what possible grounds could there be for sacrificing a rapid seventy-five percent reduction over a statistical dispute that wouldn't even have effect till the next century?

One worthy idea from the administration proposal is now wavering in Congress: a strong alternate fuels provision. Despite his oil-patch background, President Bush signed off on a proposal that would have required oil companies to begin pushing methanol (a low-pollution gasoline substitute usually made from natural gas) and ethanol (low-pollution corn-based fuel), and automakers to build a substantial number of cars equipped for these fuels. Democrats in the Senate, of all folks, deleted the meaningful features of the provision. (See REFORMULATED GASOLINE.)

Assuming the bill becomes law, Representative Henry Waxman of California should be heralded a dull hero; Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell of Maine a cranky one. Waxman not only kept the clean air issue alive through the Reagan dark years, but at key points he has swallowed his chances for media credit in order to ensure that some bill passes—rare behavior on Capitol Hill these days. Mitchell took over what is normally the authorizing subcommittee chairman's policy role because the chairman, Max Baucus of Montana, was out of his depth on this issue. It was important to Mitchell's leadership image that he shift as much credit as possible from Bush onto his party. Early in the dance Mitchell was romancing environmentalists, whose ratings are important in Maine; but when enviros tried to attach provisions that would have made them feel righteous while leading to the bill's defeat, Mitchell held firm for common sense.

Will the new Clean Air Act make American air pristine? No. Severely polluted cities such as Los Angeles, Houston, and New York are certain still to have problems even if all goes well with enforcement. But the current twenty-year trend toward cleaner air will accelerate, and the next round of air legislation can tackle the next remaining problems. Take what you can get.

CLIMATE CHANGE The world's temperature may or may not be increasing by the several degrees necessary to cause sea-level rises or unbearable temperatures for the poor in the equatorial Third World. "Climate change" is, unfortunately, a more immediate prospect.

Some researchers believe that a small increase in world temperatures—much less than the greenhouse gloom predictions—will alter weather patterns. There may be storms of increasing severity, droughts in what are now agricultural regions, added rainfall in places we don't need it, and disruption of the water cycles of the lakes and rivers on which the world's cities rely. The unusual behavior of El Niño and other major ocean currents are taken by some as indication that climate change is beginning. Weather patterns vary all the time, of course, and no one really knows what drives the vacillations. But for the next few decades, climate change is probably a greater worry than global warming.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS Many economists are intensely frustrated that the media refuse to discuss the fact that

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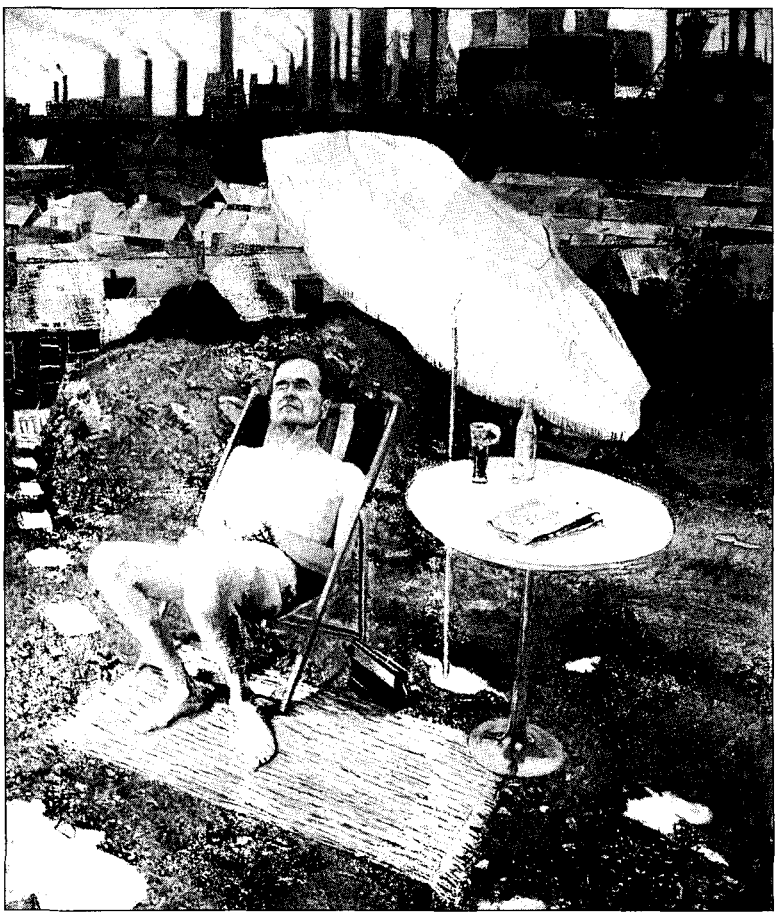
environmental protection often doesn't stand up to a cost-benefit test. So let's discuss it.

During last spring's White House debate over what Clean Air Act terms the administration would propose, Office of Management and Budget Director Richard Darman snapped that acid rain restrictions would cost "$6,000 per fish saved." Darman was put in his place when a high-level participant shot back, "Dick, you're the sort of guy who would put a SKIERS FOR NUCLEAR WINTER sticker on his car." In truth, many environmental initiatives don't do particularly well when subjected to cost-benefit analysis. The trouble is that freedom from pollution is a social good, deserving of the special protection granted other freedoms.



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It may be fair to use C/B analysis as, say, the tool for judging certification of a new drug that would help a large number of people while injuring a tiny number. But protection of the ecology differs from this kind of test in several respects. Cost estimates for pollution abatement are usually far higher than actual expenditures, and benefits are hard to project because in most cases it's impossible to know whether any given person would have gotten sick had the environment been cleaner. Nor is there any rational way of assigning benefit value to the beauty of nature, the enrichment that comes from having wilderness preserves and parks, the potential genetic value of other species, and so on.

The proper test for environmental regulation is reasonableness. Economists blanch at that term because it engages subjective human emotions, which don't translate into bar graphs. But that's real life for ya. Huge expenditures for infinitesimal gains don't pass a reasonableness test. (See ASBESTOS.) But most environmental improvements—such as smog and acid rain reduction—can be achieved at reasonable cost.

ECONOMIC SCORECARD, THE Virtually all of industry's claims that environmental controls would shut down factories have turned out to be hogwash. Some environmental regulations have even made industries more competitive. Regulation of the carcinogen vinyl chloride caused the plastics industry to discover a less expensive method of manufacturing; auto emissions and fuel economy standards forced Detroit to learn high-efficiency engine design, a necessity for competition with Japan.

In a major switch, some corporations are now earnestly tightening environmental controls, not just giving them lip service. Monsanto is voluntarily reducing its toxic air emissions ninety percent; two years ago Dow broke away from the petrochemical industry's united foot-dragging front and endorsed more federal regulation. Causes for such corporate enlightenment: fear of new liability costs imposed by laws like Superfund; grudging awareness that bad environmental p.r. is not going to go away; preference for uniform federal regulation to fifty conflicting state regimes; a realization by firms that are ahead in environmental controls that forcing competitors to clean up too helps level the market playing field.

Typically, however, the impetus for environmental improvements is imposed on industry by activist and community pressure. As Peter Sandman of Rutgers University notes, at every point along the environmental progress curve corporations have claimed pride in whatever they've been forced to do in the past, while insisting that whatever they're being asked now is out of the question.

EMISSIONS TRADING At last, Representative Bob Forehead of "Washingtoon" will be heartened to know, there are going to be pollution rights! The new Clean Air Act contains a section allowing power plants to buy and sell on the open market the rights to emit acid rain precursors. The existence of this provision has delighted economists and horrified most activists, with the exception of the Environmental Defense Fund, which supports it. The theory is that emissions trading will make it possible for field-level managers rather than bureaucrats to decide which power plants can lower emissions most rapidly and efficiently. Those that can cut

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their pollution quickly will do so, and profit by selling their certificates; plants that would have technical problems cutting back will buy some emissions rights. This is a new approach to pollution control: using market incentives rather than federal "command and control," this year's Out term. If successful, the idea may be expanded to other environmental categories.

Enviros feel that however pragmatic, the program offends because it sanctions the existence of some pollution. "But the worst way to sanction pollution is the way we do it now, with regulations that sound great on paper and cannot be enforced," says Senator Tim Wirth of Colorado, who may have the most sophisticated and non-conventional understanding of environmentalism in Congress. Anyway, the amount of pollution permitted by the trading system is programmed to gradually decline.

ENVIRO LINEUP, THE Here are the major players in environmentalism: the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Greenpeace, the National Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), and the Sierra Club.

The EDF and the NRDC are the most influential in Washington, through effective lobbying and the fact that both do original science. It was the NRDC's analysis of Alar that prevailed; EDF researchers have countered industry claims that acid rain is no problem. The NRDC leans hard left; reporters rely on it for quotes expressing outrage at anything government or industry does. The EDF, the only enviro group with an economics wing, is currently held a turncoat because it helped write the emissions-trading portion of the new Clean Air Act.

Greenpeace is the fastest-growing, appealing to the young with its direct-involvement tactics. The group's leadership boasts of spurning the establishment; in fund-raising, however, Greenpeace worships the system. It eagerly solicits endorsements from rock stars and celebrities, people not known for promoting an ethic of modest consumption. Currently Greenpeace is running save-the-whales ads starring Christie Brinkley, whose lifestyle could support 10,000 Third World children. Greenpeace has displaced Amnesty International as the entertainment industry's charity of choice.

PIRG is a leader in organizing local citizens' groups; the Audubon Society and Wildlife Federation are large mainstream organizations. The Sierra Club lately is a queer case. Its reserve of public goodwill, dating to the 1960s when it was the environmental vanguard, runs deep. But its behavior has become crankier and crankier as it tries to respond to the problem of differentiating itself now that environmentalism is mainstream.

Then there's Earth First!, a group that endorses "ecotage." Earth First! says that people should chop down power lines, pour sand in the gas lines of bulldozers, drive spikes into trees so they can't be logged. Some members are under indictment; co-founder David Foreman is a media darling, having recently received a fawning portrayal on "60 Minutes." Typical Foreman: "An ice age is coming, and I welcome it as a much needed cleansing. I see no solution to our ruination of Earth except for a drastic reduction of the human population." It's unclear how often Earth First! actually has carried out ecotage. The group seems sustained by television's appetite for people who will calmly and politely say outrageous things.

ENVIRO POLITICS Enviros won the last twenty years by a hefty margin, but you'd never know it from their behavior. Now that their cause is mainstream, they're nervous: If Republicans call themselves environmentalists, doesn't that mean something went wrong? Of course, enviros are encoded to be upset—that's their social function.

Then there's the fund-raising imperative. Environmental groups now have stakes in self-preservation, and direct-mail appeals are a prime revenue source. As the right-wing kooks have shown, scare tactics are what produce money through the mails. In this regard some enviros subconsciously long for the new Clean Air Act to fail; then they could drop-ship mailings decreeing a new disaster and a president who is "against the environment."

Politically, environmentalism has become a refuge of anti-growth and counterculture sentiment. To the extent it is a proxy for anti-growth, it has a pull-up-the-ladders aspect: I've made my pile via the system, now don't you dare spoil the view from my vacation home window. To the extent sentiment is counterculture, movement members are eager for indications that society is collapsing. If scientists called a press conference to say, "Great news, we've recalibrated the satellites and it turns out there's no ozone hole after all," many enviros would be heartbroken.

The anti-growth aspect can be simple property-values elitism. But there's something much deeper to the counterculture aspect—cutting across class lines to engage people who feel screwed by the direction of society, or have an uneasy sense that progress is elementally flawed. Silly though they sometimes appear, most environmental zealots act from feelings that are genuine and important for society to hear: from a sense that material culture has lost its bearings, and that awareness of our roles in nature may cure what ails modern humanity.

ENVIRO RUBBISH Trouble is, hardly anyone who thinks in the above way is willing to act in the above way. In some social protest categories like civil rights, there are complex arguments regarding when dissenters may be justified in stepping outside the law. But if you believe power plants to be elementally wrong, you don't have to sabotage the lines—you can refuse to have them connected to your house. Has any Earth First! sympathizer done that? Is there one environmentalist in a million who actually lives in a dwelling with no power or central heat, grows all his own food, would if injured refuse high-tech medical care or if ill refuse drugs, never rides in any car, subway, bus, or train, and declines to attend environmental conferences because it would take too long to ride there on a horse? Enviros commonly cite

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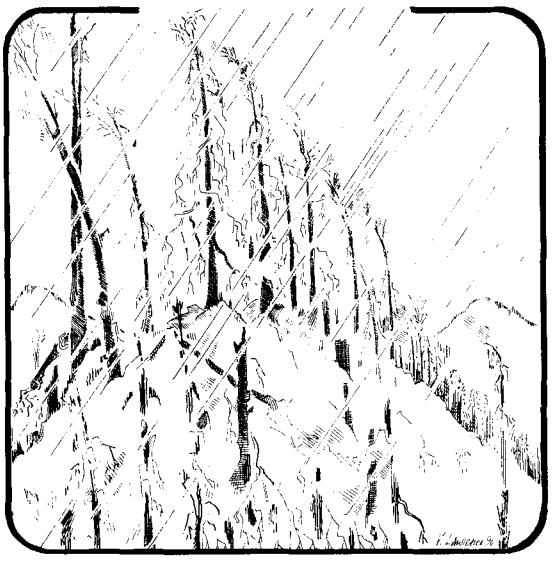
E. F. Schumacher's theory that people are better off spending their lives in small village economies living by their own resources, because this gives you mastery over your own fate. I've observed some of the world's peasant population at the village level and can't imagine any way to have less mastery over your fate, but still, nothing's stopping enviros from living this way, today, in the United States. Except convenience.

The idea that someone else should make ecological sacrifices is a common thread in environmental theory. Thomas Berry, a retired Jesuit father in vogue as an ecological essayist, has written, "A few hundred automobiles with good roads may be a great blessing. Yet when the number increases into the millions and hundreds of millions, the automobile is capable of destroying higher forms of life on the entire planet." What possible ordering of society could lead only to a few hundred cars yet a network of good roads? One in which inordinate resources were lavished on the elite, at the expense of the typical person. Through this sentence Berry betrays one of the most common materialist fantasies—the desire to have the entire road to himself.



ACID RAIN
DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE

FOREST LOSS, TOPSOIL LOSS, AND DESERTIFICATION Till the recent Amazon burnings, world forests were making a minor comeback, partly because chopping wood for home heat is being supplanted by those awful fossil fuels and that awful nuclear power. Now forest acres are declining and deserts increasing, mostly because of human activities. Overuse of pesticides, fertilizers, and irrigation water is causing severe topsoil losses. (See UNFRIENDLY FARMS.) Desert expansion is unattractive for obvious reasons. Forest losses not only decrease species habitats but may aggravate the greenhouse effect by reducing a natural means of subtracting carbon dioxide from the air. Topsoil loss is especially troubling because it takes nature millions of years to make soil from rock. As others have noted, ample soil may be a more important geologic gift than ample petroleum. There are alternatives to gasoline; it's hard to imagine running society without soil.

"GARBAGE CRISIS," THE In the 1970s my first job as a journalist was with *Waste Age* (its real name), the trade magazine of the garbage industry. One of my first stories quoted various luminaries warning that a "garbage crisis" was about to strike. Fifteen years later it's still about to strike.

Except in a few densely populated cities, it's nutty to maintain that a country as vast as America is "running out" of space for landfills. There is room to landfill our trash till the Lord's return. What we are running out of is willingness to tolerate landfills. That's as it should be. Though landfills can be built with reasonable environmental safety, they are fundamentally bad ideas: enablers of an irresponsible attitude toward resource consumption. What are responsible alternatives? Enviros say recycling. Supposedly it's about to take off. Fifteen years ago I wrote story after story saying recycling was about to take off.

Grumps maintain that recycling is a fraud, noting that more recycled newsprint is already available than processors will buy. But don't markets always take time to develop? There's no reason the United States can't eventually recycle a quarter of its trash, considering that the advanced economy of Japan recycles more. Though separation of aluminum cans and newspaper, the two most viable recycling commodities, is a big pain for homeowners, it's a good idea for society.

But recycling won't ever solve all disposal problems; and reductions in the packaging content of products aren't going to make more than a tiny nick in the problem. Municipal waste is probably best managed with a combination of moderate recycling, waste-to-energy plants burning the bulk of the trash, and some landfills (there's no scheme that eliminates them) for ash from the burners.

Lately enviros have grown hysterical in their opposition to waste-to-energy, even though this would help replace fossil fuel consumption. (Most of the energy value in trash is "biomass," a renewable resource.) Why? Because the plants, by alleviating the perception of a garbage crisis, would reduce pressure for the quixotic goal of universal recycling. Plus they're built by big profit-hungry firms, so they must be evil. Enviros have succeeded in terrifying many communities about waste-to-energy facilities by talking up trace dioxin emissions almost laughably small. (Enviros are up in arms about a Georgetown, South Carolina, paper mill because its effluent contains 0.6 parts per trillion of dioxin.) Waste-to-energy furnaces have been widely used in Western Europe for half a century, and no one's been able to document any public health harm. Scandinavia studies indicate some long-term risk to workers inside such plants, but none to the general public.

By the way, in the mid-1980s about a third of the nation's landfills closed, owing to an EPA technical action with the ponderous name "loss of interim status." The closed landfills were pretty much a who's who of the nation's cheesy operations; this wide-scale shutdown was a great thing for the environment, not a "crisis."

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GREEN PRODUCTS For now, forget 'em. There's practically no difference other than higher price between most green products and what they supplant. "Biodegradable" garbage bags, for instance, only degrade in the laboratory, not under landfill conditions. For the longer term, however, this is a promising idea. Let's see if somebody can come up with products that are meaningfully green.

GLOBAL WARMING: IS IT HAPPENING? Data are dueling over two aspects of this subject: whether warming has already been detected, and whether computers can project temperatures for the next century. (See "The Call of the Wild" by Evan Eisenberg, page 30.) Widescale climate effects are so little understood that there are currently scientific debates on matters as basic as whether warming would cause increased rainfall or drought; whether plants would flourish in more carbon dioxide or gag on the stuff.

There's even a faction that thinks global warming might be acceptable. Under this theory, my hometown of Buffalo would become a vacation paradise. The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the same outfit George Bush was blasted for failing to deliver a doomsday speech to, has estimated that a world warming of 3.5 degrees Fahrenheit would increase agricultural output in the Soviet Union by forty percent and in China by twenty percent (currently chill latitudes would suddenly have growing seasons), while aiding reforestation worldwide. One IPCC committee projected that on balance gains in agriculture and forest growth would outweigh losses of coastal areas owing to sea-level rises.

GLOBAL WARMING: VEILED? Perhaps the most important question, raised by Pat Michaels of the University of Virginia, is why the industrial era's output of greenhouse gas hasn't yet triggered runaway heat.

One possibility is that scientific understanding of the greenhouse effect is fundamentally mistaken. Another is that nature's climate control systems are more resilient than currently assumed. Nature manages greenhouse gases by having carbon dioxide inhaled by plants and absorbed by ocean life; research increasingly suggests that biologically moderated greenhouse cycles help keep Earth's climate steady and temperate. Plant decay, volcanic seepage, and other natural processes annually add about 200 billion tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere; human activity accounts for 7 billion tons, perhaps a small enough amount that nature can for the moment handle it.

A third possibility is that we haven't reached the greenhouse tipping point. Environmentalists urgently warn that atmospheric carbon dioxide has increased by twenty-five percent in the last century, which sounds like a guarantee of woe. They don't add that the carbon dioxide background level is about 290 parts per million (0.029 percent), so that even a huge relative increase in carbon dioxide has little absolute effect on the amount in the air.

Next, it's possible a greenhouse would be occurring but is being held in check by some other influence. One candidate is "smog block." Industrial activity has put lots of smudgy pollutants into the air, which may be blocking some of the sunlight that would otherwise reach the ground—a kind of nuclear frost. Evidence to support this view comes from data suggesting that temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere, where the industrial activity is, have not risen, while those in the Southern Hemisphere have. Emissions from volcanic activity, up recently, might also be creating a natural block.

Or maybe warming is being temporarily inhibited by the oceans, whose enormous mass tends to smooth out global temperature swings. Since the middle decades of this century were chilly, this line holds, the oceans cooled; now they are giving up their coolness by drawing extra heat from the air, and once they become warm—look out.

Then there is the incredibly annoying possibility that acid rain prevents global warming. Thomas Wigley and other scientists have recently produced studies suggesting that aerosol particles of sulfur dioxide increase the "albedo," or reflectivity, of Earth's cloud layer, causing more solar heat to bounce back into space. If this theory is correct, acid rain reductions without greenhouse gas control might backfire.

Finally, it's possible that global temperatures can be skewed in either direction by small variations in the output of the sun. Our star is nearing the peak of an unusual sunspot cycle; whether that has any relationship to its energy production, no one knows. In fact precious little is known about the internal processes of the sun. A paper by the astronomer-SDI salesman Robert Jastrow suggesting that solar variability is the driving force in climate change has had considerable influence in the Bush White House.

GLOBAL WARMING: WHAT TO DO? Some in Congress have suggested that because it would take a long time to reduce society's output of greenhouse gases, we should start doing so—before the verdict on global warming is in. Conservatives reply that this would amount to shutting down the industrial state on sheer speculation.

The United States, Soviet Union, and China produce fifty-one percent of the world's artificial carbon dioxide emissions; if the effects of forest burning were factored in, Brazil would join this big three. Power plants and family cars are the primary villains. Of the Western powers only France, the world's most energy-efficient state—its economic output per BTU input is double that of the United States—isn't a major carbon dioxide malefactor. But enviros don't talk up France because its low fossil fuel consumption is achieved mainly by greater reliance on nuclear power than any other nation.

Substantial immediate cuts in Western carbon dioxide output would likely come through a combination of higher mpg automobiles, greater investments in energy conservation technology, and more nuclear power, preferably from advanced "inherently safe" reactors. (See "Safe Nuclear Power" by Lawrence M. Lidsky, TNR, December 28, 1987.) Well—what's so bad about that formula? All items sound good to me

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regardless of whether global warming looms.

There's more fossil fuel around than the Chickens Little said, but we've got to start weaning ourselves from the stuff someday. Irrational dread of nuclear power should wane; so should attachment to inefficient cars. An attempt to push the U.S. auto economy standard from the current 27.5 mpg to 40 mpg recently failed in the Senate, though a more reasonable 33 mpg might have passed. Carpers point out that raising the standard will take years to produce any notable effect on fuel consumption, because most cars on the road will be older, less efficient models. So? This is like saying a policeman who sees a murder committed shouldn't bother making an arrest since there will still be criminals on the loose. All public policy changes occur at the margin.

And the conservative idea that industrial life without petroleum is impossible seems like flat-Earth thinking to me. Sure, it's hard to imagine an advanced economy based on anything other than whopping consumption of petroleum. But little more than a century ago, no intellectual imagined economies based on whopping consumption of petroleum. All someone has to do is invent a practical means for separating hydrogen from water, and an inexhaustible, pollution-free replacement for gasoline will become available. Solar power collected in space, fusion reactors, and other concepts that may become real in the next century hold out the hope of humming economies without any environmental degradation or fuel crisis worries. Not that this would necessarily please environmentalists.

CLEAN AIR
DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE

HEALTH SCORECARD Though environmentalists predicted it would get much, much worse, U.S. public health has shown steady improvement in recent decades. AIDS aside, incidence of stroke, heart disease, and hypertension have declined while the life expectancy continues to lengthen. A revealing statistic is that if the mortality rates from 1940 applied to 1988, 4 million Americans would have passed on last year. Instead, 2.2 million died. This represents a spectacular net public health improvement occurring during the very period when the manufacture and use of toxic chemicals, dangerous machines, and nuclear materials expanded exponentially.

Considering that gross industrial pollution was far worse in the past than it is today, if the repeatedly predicted pollution-induced health crisis were going to occur, it should already be in evidence: a huge demographic cohort of Americans exposed to gross pollution from the turn of the century through the 1960s having reached the point in life where disease is typical. Yet the age-adjusted incidence of cancer has increased only slightly. Would public health have improved even more with greater environmental regulation? Almost certainly. This, in fact, is the best argument for substantial new investments in pollution control.

MAN OR A MOUSE, ARE YOU A? Everybody knows the objection that megadoses used on lab animals distort the reliability of tests. (Carcinogen doses may be equivalent to 35,000 times normal human ingestion.) Less understood is that lab animals and humans often respond differently to chemicals because of their differing metabolisms.

Dioxin, which terrifies everybody, was commonly described ten years ago as "the most deadly compound ever devised by man." It's unquestionably dangerous. But recent studies suggest the danger level to have been significantly exaggerated, because it turns out mice are much more sensitive to this chemical family than people are. This may be why there was no general public health crisis at Love Canal, which reeked of dioxins.

Mice are attractive to researchers because they are small, cheap, and reproduce and die rapidly, allowing "long-term" effects to be observed quickly. Chimps, apes, and pigs would be better subjects for toxicology, having metabolisms more like ours. But the primate family suffers enough as it is for medical testing, and pigs are too large to be practical lab animals. Between megadoses and the fact that mice aren't men, lab animal results don't necessarily translate into reliable human disease projections—another possible reason why fewer people are dying than expected. (Or hoped, if you're a "Deep" Ecologist.)

MODELING, STATISTICAL Most EPA risk estimates are derived from models, not actual mortality or exposure data, a controversial practice among statisticians. For instance, EPA's estimate that radon kills 20,000 Americans per year (making this natural substance more dangerous than all artificial pollutants combined) is extrapolated from the fates of fewer than 400 uranium miners. New Jersey is the only state to have compiled hard data on radon incidence. It found that about one percent of residents were exposed to dangerous levels, confirming that the threat is genuine. EPA models predicted the number would be ten percent. Recent studies conducted at Stanford and the University of California indicate that EPA models predict residues on lettuce of captan, a common pesticide, would be 51,000 times greater than what researchers actually have found; on

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tomatoes, the models overstate by 11,000 times.

MUDDLING FORWARD Though everyone's looking for bans and similar dramatic announcements, most of what environmental regulation accomplished in the past twenty years came through obscure technical rulings getting next to no media attention.

Municipal landfills are becoming less likely to pollute because of a series of directives regarding composition of barriers. "The lower liner shall be constructed of at least a three-foot layer of recompacted clay or other natural material with a permeability of no more than one times ten to the minus seven centimeters per second," words from an unheralded 1984 law that caused enormous grousing by landfill operators, demonstrate what most real-world environmental reforms are like. Ocean dumping of sludge is ending because of a tediously drawn-out sequence of technical and legal gambits by enviros and the EPA (the EPA with the approval of Reagan White House officials after they realized the worst offenders were liberal strongholds New York City and Boston). This past winter the EPA promulgated a rule bringing twenty-five categories of organic chemicals, with names like hexachloro-1,3-butadiene, under industrial pre-treatment jurisdiction, meaning the stuff can't go into sewers anymore. Lots of no-glory incremental steps like these are the guts of what is bringing the environment back.

NATURE, THE CRUMMINESS OF Nature makes toxins, pollutants, and radioactive materials in far greater quantities than man does. Nature discards creatures with a pitilessness that makes humanity seem saintly: more than ninety-nine percent of the species ever to come into existence have been rendered extinct. So why does conventional wisdom hold that natural arrangements are metaphysically superior to artificial ones? It's easy for *Homo sapiens* to imagine nature metaphysically pure, since we sit at the pinnacle of the food chain. No species preys on us, and no organisms save diseases can even challenge us. But to the majority of Earth's creatures that live to be chased and eaten, it is doubtful the natural scheme suggests Eden.

The gravest challenge human beings pose to the ecosphere is that we will continue to behave in a purely "natural" manner: expanding our population to the limit the environment can carry, as other creatures would do if competitors did not stop them. Perhaps via technology, humanity can vastly increase its numbers while somehow satisfying its resource needs, dodging the consequences of the starvation cycles that control other species.

But a purely "natural" takeover by man would leave other species little hope. What's most urgently required of humanity is artificial thinking—conscious self-control of a kind unknown in nature.

NATURE, REFORM PROSPECTS FOR Undermining today's environment debate is the notion that man's existence is somehow bad or a perversion of nature. Attendees at the recent profusion of environmental conferences know their low point invariably occurs when someone takes the podium to deliver a litany of politically correct guilt over his own existence. To reject humanity as unnatural does nature a great injustice. Man springs from the natural scheme just as does any animal or plant. The thinking intellect is essential to the fulfillment of nature's dream, especially since, using our intellect, we may one day find wholly unnatural solutions not only to environmental problems but to flaws inherent in nature itself.

One prominent flaw of the natural scheme is its amorality. The tiger does not recognize such concepts as right and wrong; it kills by rote, feeling nothing as it slaughters the antelope. Tigers as a group would feel nothing if they slaughtered enough antelopes to render that group extinct. *Homo sapiens* has at least developed the spark of conscience that tells us such behavior is wrong.

Our record regarding the heeding of higher instincts is of course dismal, but then remember that by the geological clock the notion of "morality" is a creation of the second hand's most recent tick. For all the powerful criticisms environmental writers make of human abuse of nature, it's amazing they seem to care so little that the arrival of people has at least entered into the natural equation the new, innovative, and entirely artificial idea that suffering and pointless death ought to be opposed.

Consider that by gaining access to technology, *Homo sapiens* is the first creature to have the possibility of living without killing. Today we slaughter animals for food, and brethren for distressingly trivial reasons. But unlike the tiger, man can think his way out of both reliance on lower species for nutrients and materials (with a technical solution) and persecution of his own (with a moral solution).

Homo sapiens is also the first creature to have the possibility of preserving life through the inevitability of environmental change. Today humankind is the foe of many species, assiduously sabotaging their hopes. But that's today, with human understanding of the environment and our proper role in it at a pitifully low level. Who's to say that as that level rises positions might not reverse, and man become an agent for the preservation of life, rescuing species that would otherwise fall extinct?

NUCLEAR POWER No one has ever been killed by a nuclear power plant. Using coal for electric power annually condemns to death 101 U.S. miners, the average for the last decade; the mining leaves huge gashes in the Earth. Nuclear generators emit no greenhouse gases, acid rain, or smog; they displace fossil fuels, which we ought to be conserving for our grandchildren.

Nuclear power has many problems. But this is a reason to shut down the bad plants, not to oppose new, technically improved facilities, with passive-safety and waste-reducing features. The cost of nuclear plants may soon be reduced by an overdue shift on the part of American manufacturers to standard modular designs, rather than making every installation one of a kind.

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Waste remains an indelible concern. Even Energy Secretary James Watkins, an old nuclear hard-liner, has said that because of waste, contemporary fission reactors are only acceptable as a transitional power source, till alternatives like fusion or perhaps solar energy collected in space become available in the next century. In theory, fusion reactors could burn seawater, producing almost no byproducts; space solar power could be entirely benign. So how about this for a compromise liberal position on nuclear power: live with fission reactors till we know for sure about the greenhouse effect, or something better comes along.

OZONE DEPLETION It's real. Even Margaret Thatcher, whose high-latitude nation lies near the North Pole ozone breach, is worried. Stratospheric ozone screens out ultraviolet radiation, which can cause skin cancer and birth defects. Satellite data show that ozone over Antarctica seasonally declines forty percent or more compared with a decade ago. Unanswered is: What does this mean? First, it's far from proven that the current degree of ozone depletion harms anyone. Holes have only been observed over the poles, where there's hardly any life anyway; and it's not clear that even the UV at the poles reaches a level that is dangerous, though some researchers think this will be proved eventually. *Nature* recently published a study suggesting that regardless of what the ozone layer is doing, observed UV levels at the ground have declined in recent years.

THIRD WORLD POLLUTION
DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE

Second, though CFCs unquestionably create a breakdown product that depletes ozone, it's not yet proved they are solely responsible for the holes. Little is known about natural ozone cycles. The destructive CFC byproduct is chlorine; natural emissions of chlorine (mainly from volcanos) far exceeds artificial quantities. For technical reasons CFC chlorine is more likely to reach the stratosphere than chlorine from volcanos. But with world volcanic activity up in recent years, there may be some relationship between that and the sudden holes.

Third, there may be a solar ozone cycle. Stratospheric ozone is thought to be made when solar energies (including the very UV radiation we want blocked) strike normal two-atom oxygen molecules, converting them to three-atom ozone variations. Do sun output changes create ozone depletion and restoration cycles? Nobody knows.

This said, humanity can ban CFCs but it can't plug volcanos. The Western nations are committed to a fifty percent reduction of CFC manufacturing by the year 2000. (A bigger deal across the Atlantic since European countries never banned CFCs as a spray-can propellant, as the United States did twenty years ago.) Last year Bush said he would seek a total CFC halt, though he has yet to introduce legislation to this effect. Du Pont, the principal CFC manufacturer, says it will cease production by 2000, offering a new substitute. If CFCs someday prove not to be the ozone villain, we can always go back to them.

Two extremely grating complications: First, the new substitute is less energy efficient in air conditioners and refrigerators, the main CFC use. That means more energy will be consumed to compensate . . . which may enhance the greenhouse effect . . . which means more fuel use. . . .

Second, Third World nations refuse to sign the CFC accord: they may take over manufacturing of the chemical, negating any gain in the West. But consider that lack of refrigeration is the principal cause of the food spoilage that plagues many developing countries. There's no way they can surrender any aspect of affordable refrigeration (the Du Pont CFC substitute is more expensive as well as less efficient) to help the West cover its pollution guilt. Unless some evidence emerges showing ozone depletion is affecting people other than ozone researchers at the poles, it isn't likely the Third World will stop making CFCs.

Anyway, you'll be pleased to know recent research indicates that urban smog is quite effective at impeding UV rays. So if ozone depletion does become generally dangerous, future hardbodies may flock to tan under the friendly LA smog dome, instead of in some dangerously clean place like Hawaii or New Zealand.

PESTICIDES According to Bruce Ames, the California toxicologist who invented the Ames Test, the standard means of determining if a chemical is carcinogenic, the typical American diet contains 10,000 times more naturally occurring pesticide, much of it carcinogenic, than residues of the synthetic variety. (Once an ecologists' hero, Ames became the devil incarnate when he started saying this.) Plants make a variety of biological toxins for metabolic purposes or as evolutionary adaptations against competitors. Arsenic and cyanide are two toxins commonly occurring in even organically grown fruits; the biological pesticides in some plants have twelve-syllable chemical names that would scare the wits out of you on an ingredients label. If lab animals were given some natural toxins in the same doses used to test synthetic compounds, they would not slowly grow ill, as did the Alar mice. They'd drop dead on the spot.

Concern about synthetic pesticides is now well out of proportion, though it's easy to see why this happened,

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since memories remain fresh of DDT and other "hard" pesticides that did enormous damage before being banned. The public seems to have forgotten that most pesticides are there for legit reasons: increasing yields so food is cheap, killing off microbes that otherwise would make consumers sick. Those stories about people getting ill from what they bought at the health food store are no joke.

That said, it's crazy not to ban any suspect food chemical that does not have some strong compensating virtue. Alar was an easy choice—who cares if apples are shiny red or only sorta red? Others may be tricky. In the wake of the Alar flap the EPA also banned EDBC, a common fungicide that causes cancer in lab animals. The lowly fungus produces most of nature's deadliest poisons and carcinogens—aflatoxin and a list of others. The net carcinogen content of the U.S. food supply may increase as a result of the EDBC decision.

One positive sign is that the trend in pesticide chemistry is toward compounds that can be used in small quantities ("microdose" pesticides), have narrow ranges of toxicity, and lose their potency rapidly. Great promise is held by the fledgling science of altering plants so that they do not require pesticides. If you're horrified by the thought of genetic engineering, bear in mind that one of its likely first effects on society is a reduction in food chemicals.

POLLUTION SCORECARD Since the first Earth Day in 1970 most measures of U.S. ecological quality have improved, not declined. Direct industrial water pollution is down significantly; the Great Lakes and some other water bodies are recovering. (Groundwater pollution is more of a question.) Though old toxic waste dumps identified under the Superfund program continue to bedevil everyone, creation of new dumps has essentially ceased—an easily overlooked accomplishment. Development of wetlands has slowed; growth, in general, is less likely to come at the expense of land or vistas better preserved. Airborne sulfur and particulates, the two leading varieties of air pollution in 1970, have fallen sharply; lead, the worst atmospheric poison, has nearly disappeared from the U.S. sky; though smog, an index of American prosperity as measured by per capita auto ownership, has increased slightly, the rate of increase is below that of the increase in autos and economic output, indicating that with further effort smog can be bested, too.

PROPHECY SCORECARD Environmental prophecies have frequently landed far wide of the mark. A perennial favorite, cataclysmic world famine, has yet to pan out. (There was a 1967 best seller called *Famine 1975*, and Paul Erhlich still elicits warm coos on the media/Robert Redford conference circuit by declaring that general starvation is just around the corner.) After the winter of 1976-77, the coldest in a century, many of the same people now crying global warming declared that an ice age was beginning. Even Stephen Schneider, an atmospheric scientist who is extremely sharp and a favorite source of greenhouse effect quotes, wrote a book in the 1970s lending credence to an imminent ice age. According to the Club of Rome, we're all dead already.

REFORMULATED GASOLINE During the Reagan years petroleum companies repeatedly told the EPA it was impossible to cut the inherent pollution content of gasoline. Then semi-Texan George Bush proposed mandatory use of alternative fuels such as methanol. Suddenly oil companies allowed as how gasoline could be reformulated to make it cleaner. "I've been in the business twenty years and never even heard the phrase 'reformulated gasoline' till we announced the alternative fuels provision," Reilly says. Arco and Marathon are already offering reformulated grades in high-smog markets. The product appears to burn about as cleanly as ethanol or methanol, making it a terrific development. Fuel improvements are an especially effective form of pollution control because the benefits spread to cars already on the road.

But now the advance is in limbo. When it seemed that mandatory alternative fuels would be in the Clean Air Act, it was expected that every oil company would reformulate, accomplishing a smog reduction very rapidly and cheaply. Now with mandatory alternative fuels in danger of being chopped out of the bill, this may not happen.

By the way, the typical pre-1975 car now emits twenty-five times as much pollution as the typical new car. By 1993 a single older car will countervail the emissions gains of fifty new ones. Yet there is no initiative to get old cars off the road. Republicans won't touch this one because cars are private property, and Democrats protest that smoggy old models tend to be owned by the poor. How about a bounty program? Paying people to junk outdated cars might be more socially efficacious than trying to wring the last fraction of a gram of smog from new car exhaust.

REVERSIBILITY Though commentators often claim human abuses cause aspects of the environment to be "destroyed," nearly every environmental mistake is reversible—except extinction. Sometimes reverses can come surprisingly fast. Lake Erie and the Thames River, both pronounced "dead" in the 1960s, are already nearly thriving again merely through moderate pollution control. The bald eagle may be taken off the endangered species list a decade after many said there was no hope of averting extinction. Within ten years it should be impossible to determine where the Exxon Valdez spill even occurred. Whenever the ecology is pronounced "destroyed" by a transitory event, bear in mind nature is an elaborately defended fortress that has been repelling assaults for four billion years.

It's even possible that some extinctions will become reversible. To the extent DNA from dead species can be found or inferred from the "junk genes" in living species, believed by some researchers to be switched-off records of ancestral forms, humanity might someday bring creatures back to life instead of wiping them out.

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SPECIES RIGHTS It may be that the worst crime humanity now commits on Earth is killing off species. The biologist E. O. Wilson estimates that people have recently begun to extinguish lesser creatures at a pace 10,000 times the typical natural rate. Wilson further believes that the diversity of the ecosphere is richer right now than at any time in Earth's past. That is a testament to the environment's recuperative powers, since the past contains catastrophes (ice ages, comet impacts, shifts of the planetary axis) that dwarf human meddling. It also suggests that by killing this diversity, we are doing far more profound harm than through routine reversible mistakes like spilling oil or smogging up the Grand Canyon.

Meanwhile, there's an argument for species preservation that rarely enters the impassioned animals rights debate. Namely, that other creatures may be evolving toward sapience, too. In principle many if not most species ought to be "trying" to become intelligent, because as *Homo sapiens* has shown, intelligence is the most powerful of adaptive mechanisms. Dolphins, chimpanzees, and apes aren't merely creatures that right-thinking people shouldn't want killed; they are potentially like us. I have no qualms about asserting that people at present have a rights stature exceeding that of "every creeping thing" (Genesis 1:26). But harming the prospects of life that may someday acquire the same stature is not only wrong; it could get us into serious trouble with our creator.

UNFRIENDLY FARMS
DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE

STATES' RIGHTS A number of state and local governments have jumped ahead of Washington in environmental rules. Los Angeles is working on a far-reaching plan for smog control that calls for restrictions not just on industry but on individual behavior, a territory that terrifies Congress. (Mandatory car pools and bans on charcoal barbecues, for example.) New Jersey and Michigan have toxic cleanups stronger than Superfund. Florida, where groundwater is close to the surface, is becoming a leader in landfill crackdowns.

Last year, during sparring over the Clean Air Act, Waxman wanted the California 1993 auto emission limits made a national standard; Detroit lobbyists whined that this would cause every doughnut shop in Michigan to close, and so on. Then the governors of eight Northeastern states announced that they would seek California 1993 limits on cars sold in their jurisdictions. Detroit realized that between the West Coast and the Northeast it would have to equip half its output with the controls anyway. Opposition evaporated.

SUPERFUND All numbers in this category are stunning—31,000 abandoned toxic waste sites found; 1,224 of them put on Superfund's priority list; cleanup (which the EPA insists on calling "remediation") has begun on only 261 at them.

Since Love Canal and Times Beach in 1978, elaborate epidemiology projects have attempted to demonstrate general public health harm from leaking toxics. All have come up blank. Studies of Superfund's worst cases in Woburn, Massachusetts, and Lipari, New Jersey, show elevated leukemia incidence among families immediately adjacent. In Niagara Falls several children living in homes right on Love Canal suffered rare diseases. But no general public health damage occurred in these places.

Reagan considered Superfund a big joke, unleashing Anne Burford to destroy it. One of the most important tests of whether Bush truly is "the environment president" is whether he can make the cleanup work. People may be scared to excess about toxic dumps; but they are scared, and deserve to have their fears put to rest.

THIRD WORLD POLLUTION Anyone who's traveled in the developing world knows that it's a fantasy that Western industrial countries are the polluted ones. Mexico City, New Delhi, Karachi, and Leipzig have choking levels of air pollution, sometimes requiring auto headlights at midday. Poland, Nigeria, Kenya, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and others have sickening levels of water pollution; where "sanitation" exists, it consists of open conduits of human and industrial waste. Recently I went rafting on the remote Trisuli River in Nepal. It was revoltingly polluted. At one point I jumped off the raft to ride some rapids on a life preserver. Our Nepali guide offered cheerfully, "Whatever you do, don't open your mouth!"

In the developing world vehicles have no emissions controls, gasoline is low quality, coal is burned without stack controls, sewage and industrial discharge go directly into waterways, and wood stoves warm homes and hovels. Conventional liberalism says the Third World environment has been corrupted by technology. From what I've seen the Third World environment needs technology desperately.

THIRD WORLD RESOURCES There's a famous statistic that the United States has four percent of the world population and consumes forty percent of world resources. Americans ought to bring their consumption down. But would that address the core problem this statistic reflects? Not in the slightest. What the statistic really

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tells us is that resource consumption in the Third World has got to go up, up, up—so that the billions of impoverished men and women who make up Earth's vast underclass can enjoy some measure of physical comfort and opportunity. It's not an embellishment to say that some ecologists are more concerned with the conditions faced by grizzlies in Wyoming parks than human beings in Calcutta or Lagos. I recently drew a hiss at Harvard Divinity School by saying of Third World priorities, "People are more important than plants and animals."

Many enviros are burdened by a post-Schumacher daydream in which Third World residents don't want material goods: they would rather live as rustic peasants, patiently tending gardens and preserving ecological niches. Living in Pakistan, I discovered the most remarkable thing—people there long to be sheltered and relieved from manual labor and to have their children's diseases cured. They frantically desire cars or any kind of mechanized transportation that spares them traveling on foot with burdens on their backs.

When asked what should be done for the world's poor multitudes, enviros generally try to shift the discussion to how if it hadn't been for colonial exploitation, overpopulation never would have happened in the first place. Maybe so, but it did happen, and today there is one proven nonviolent means to bring down population growth: industrialization. Industrial countries have low birth rates. Developing countries have high birth rates. Absent some total transformation of human nature, this suggests that what the developing world needs is more industrialization.

There's a hopeful note in all this. Environmentalism and economics are likely to replace militarism and ideology as the dominant international issues of the twenty-first century. People in strong, affluent nations like ours don't have to deal with the reality of fellow beings living a subhuman existence in the slums of Nairobi or Manila. But if Third World nations, in their quest for a reasonable standard of living, begin polluting the planet in a major way, no amount of wealth or military power will insulate us from the effects. We'll have to start giving them, not selling to them, all the clean technology and sustainable agriculture tools we've got. It's a long shot, but maybe the desire to preserve the ecosphere in which we all must live will be the force that finally brings the world's fractious nations together.

TODD, JOHN Environmental biologist who runs a wonderful organization called Ocean Arks International. Todd did his doctoral work traveling the world and cataloging microbe life that once thrived under ecological conditions that are toxic by today's standards. Later he became concerned that modern sewage treatment systems were ecological failures because they produced toxic sludge. A thunderbolt hit him. Why not mix the sludge with microbes that naturally metabolize toxics? He did just that with a pilot plant in Providence. Its energy input is negligible, its product potable water. Todd believes such a system could handle all of Providence sludge with 120 acres of reaction tanks, a realistic number.

So are environmentalists happy about this breakthrough? No, they're furious. Todd says some of his old friends no longer speak to him: by discovering a solution to a man-made offense, he takes away an argument against growth.

UNFRIENDLY FARMS Farms, one of the leading customers for bulk chemicals, are now a greater source of water pollution than industry. Pesticides are more likely to reach you via farm runoff that pollutes drinking water than as residues on food. According to the EPA, today only seven percent of river and stream pollution comes from factories; sixty-five percent from farms. Seventy-four categories of pesticides have been detected in groundwater. Yet farm use of toxics is almost completely unregulated.

Liberals don't like to talk about this because their preferred worldview is that farmers are among the oppressed of the earth; conservatives shun the topic because, "Nobody can tell me what to do with my land!" The federal crop support program is up for renewal this year. Enviros are trying to inject a modest clause requiring farmers who accept subsidies to keep records of how they apply toxics. The farm lobby's gone berserk.

Overuse of pesticides and fertilizers is not only bad for the environment and farmers themselves, it's usually unnecessary. Even the National Research Council, considered a vassal of Big Science, says the typical U.S. farm employs far more chemicals than justified. The best explanation for this phenomenon is that farmers were oversold when bulk pesticides became widely available in the 1950s; now, endlessly paranoid about next year's yield, they are nervous about backing off. Since farmers have an interest in preserving their land, a movement toward sustainable agriculture—fewer chemicals, conservation tillage, "integrated pest management" that controls insects more through knowledge of their life cycles than poisons—is slowly picking up steam in the farming establishment. A little regulation to prod it along couldn't hurt.

WHITE HOUSE POLITICS John Sununu's not a monster—he pushed acid rain legislation as governor of New Hampshire—though he is well to the right of Reilly. As chief political *macher* for the White House, he is keenly aware that Bush must deliver something on his environmental promises or pay a price in 1992. Darman has mostly gotten his nose out of environmental proposals, partly because Reilly clobbered him in their first showdown over the Clean Air Act, partly because he realizes costs from the bill will be expressed in higher consumer prices, not the federal deficit, which is his baby. Roger Porter, Bush's domestic policy adviser, helped rescue the act in the Senate. Conservatives are now steaming be-

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cause they think he gave away the store.

ZERO EMISSIONS Lynda Draper, the housewife who set off a national anger campaign when a General Electric refrigerator repairman vented some CFCs out of her kitchen window, may have been overreacting: the tiny amount of chemical released had an environmental impact too minuscule to detect. But then any one person's vote has a minuscule impact on an election, and we think every citizen ought to vote. Individual incidents of pollution basically don't matter; toleration of pollution generally matters a great deal. Draper's instincts were right on the money.

Barry Commoner has said that since all regulatory schemes can be tripped up by some smart lawyer, we ought simply to outlaw pollution. Most corporate executives swear this is utterly out of the question. Don't believe them. Monsanto has already committed itself to zero; Du Pont endorsed the concept. Zero emissions of toxics may be impractical today. But in the next century executives will consider it a mundane, conventional business concept.

Corporate America has lost the public's confidence on environmental affairs, and the only thing that's going to win it back will be a regime under which factories have no regularly planned discharge of any toxic substance. Zero emissions will be expensive, and at some point have sharply diminishing social returns. People are going to press for it anyway. And there's no reason why a zero emissions standard shouldn't be an exciting goal for engineers and managers. Americans love to talk about sophisticated technology. "Sophisticated" devices don't pollute. Only crude ones do.

Next question: If industry accepts a zero standard, how about you and me? A third of sewer pollution comes from household items like bleach and paint thinner; lawn mowers and furnaces contribute to air pollution; bakeries and dry cleaners are top ten sources of smog; lawn chemicals differ little from pesticides. Everybody wants industry to change its ways. Will individuals be willing to change theirs?

ZILLIONTH, OUR NOTION OF "NATURE" MEASURED AS At every point in human history we have mistaken the current horizon for the boundary of the world. Our ancient ancestors never dreamed there were other continents; the Chinese spent a millennium imagining they were the only civilization; Renaissance Europeans were stunned to discover that there was another hemisphere.

Today we regard the living shroud around Earth and speak as though that were nature. Look up over your head some evening. Earth is one-zillionth of a zillionth of nature. Environmentalists admonish that the only way to understand the environment is to remember that everything is part of everything else. Then they speak as though Earth's ecosphere were a closed system, a be-all and end-all. It is but a tiny part of a vastly greater natural scheme. That scheme has a prominent flaw that is not visible to us here on Earth, and so has occupied comparatively little of the time of the worldly philosophers. It could, however, be clearly observed from the vantage point of the recent Voyager probe. The flaw? That most of creation is lifeless.

Of the dozens of planets and moons in this solar system, only ours appears to support life. Radio telescope searches have been unable to detect any hint of artificial transmission in our galaxy. Researchers have recently advanced theories suggesting that for reasons of physics, only a comparatively tiny percentage of the planets we presume to exist elsewhere would have anything like the narrow range of elements, temperatures, and pressures necessary to nurture the one form of life we know to be possible: carbon-based organic life. Perhaps that conclusion will turn out to be wrong, the cosmos rich with strange and beautiful forms of life. For the moment, we must assume that Earth's living system is an exception and a miracle indeed.

Now consider: though nature was unable to make most of this solar system live, a thinking intellect might. Nature was confined to what is possible in spontaneous interactions of elements randomly disturbed. Thinking creatures are restricted only by their imagination. Perhaps we are here in order to add to the natural system a component able to act by design.

It is not at all impossible to imagine that the ability to render cold planets warm and dry planets wet will someday be within human grasp, assuming we find the wisdom not to blow ourselves up in the interim. The sequence of evolution may well turn out to be: creation of life; multicellular life; plants; animals; mammals; scheming beings that abuse nature's benevolence; and finally sensible beings that return the favor by extending the gift of life into the infinite environs of space.

A continuous expansion of Earth life, which would spell ruin for the natural system here, might be a great boon to creation once Earth's creatures begin to spread outward from their place of origin. "Deep" Ecologists see the development of human consciousness as an unadulterated disaster for nature. "Planet Managers" see it as a controllable disaster. Nature herself may consider it a godsend.

The prospect of expanding life into the heavens may sound too remote to be relevant to today's environmental debates. Hardly. It's far more meaningful than such details as unburned hydrocarbon gram levels or delayed Subtitle D regulations. This prospect gives us reason to believe that humankind can take a constructive place in the larger natural scheme. Isn't that a promising long-term challenge for a race of creatures whose worst inner fear is that their existence has no lasting purpose? And it moves us to hope that if we learn to manage our world and passions wisely, our descendants may someday enjoy a truly magnificent destiny, upon which all creation will smile. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Mystifications

Elaine May, Peter Falk, and Julian Schlossberg have known one another for at least fourteen years. Elaine May wrote and directed *Mikey and Nicky* (1976), Peter Falk played Mikey, and Julian Schlossberg, a producer and distributor, made a brave effort to promote that extraordinary film. (I saw it again recently on TV and again thought it a neglected gem.) Now these people have joined up for another project, a farce-comedy called **In the Spirit** (Castle Hill), which may turn out to be neglected but which is not a gem.

May didn't direct or write it: she plays a leading part. Sandra Seacat, known as an acting coach, directed it, and it was written by Jeannie Berlin, May's daughter, with Laurie Jones. Berlin is in it, in a lesser part. Peter Falk is in it, too, also in a lesser part. Another leading role is played by Marlo Thomas. Schlossberg produced the picture and may have been as seduced by the idea of working with two *Mikey and Nicky* veterans as by the script itself. Anyway, I hope that's the case: it's more comprehensible than unalloyed admiration for the screenplay.

The idea is so lame, its articulation so mechanical, that the whole film seems artificial respiration for the premise. At the start May and Falk are a couple living in California, where he has just lost his job. Thomas is a health-food nut and spiritualist living in New York. Berlin is a hooker—yet one more movie-cliché hooker—in New York. A voice-over tells us ominously that these people's karma will bring them together. (Surprisingly, this voice is male—in a film written by two women about the adventures of two women and directed by a woman.)

And, do you know, they *are* all brought together! In Thomas's New York apartment, by a series of shameless contrivances. To give the plot somewhat more space than it merits, the long last section of the picture has May and Thomas hiding out in a big house in upstate New York, devising traps and snares for a killer they think is trailing them. Somewhere underneath, I think, is a suggestion that karma determined all.

Up to that last section, there's a mild veneer of cosmopolitan glitz. Jokes about a diet of kelp and about Shirley MacLaine mysticism fly thick and fast—well, anyway, thick. But when the physical stuff starts happening—a murder and the May-Thomas flight—pallid Woody Allen gives way to Abbott and Costello in drag.

Seacat handles the first part adequately, but she is as lost as her actors in the second, pratfall part. About May a big question mark looms. Patently she's a woman of great gifts. Patently one of those gifts is not self-management. She followed *Mikey and Nicky* by writing and directing *Ishtar*, the SS *Titanic* of film comedies. Now—perhaps out of mother love—she appears in a script that is not only weak but is quite unsuited to her sophisticated comic style. May is said to do a lot of uncredited rewriting of other people's screenplays. In this case, charity should have begun at home.

Santa Sangre (Expanded Entertainment) is differently, and ultraseriously, mystical. It was written and directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky, who wrote and directed and starred in *El Topo*, which was a *cause somewhat célèbre* in 1971. That earlier film was a religious fantasy set in the Mexican desert, with Jodorowsky as a Christ figure and with surreal and symbolical trappings that would have done any bright high school sophomore proud. But Jodorowsky had an eye. I remember trying to walk out of *El Topo* several times, but every time I started to go, another startling picture would arrest me.

There's not much that's arresting in *Santa Sangre*: this time I stayed through the whole thing hoping to be startled, but without much luck. This time the setting is Mexico City, again it's a religious fantasy; the leading role—a quasi-religious figure—is played by Jodorowsky's son, Axel. The symbolism is much less ingenious than before (if memory is serving) but is just as incessant.

A circus woman founds a Christian sect devoted to a "saint," a girl whose arms were cut off before she was raped and murdered. The circus woman's drunken husband cuts her arms off one day, then cuts his own throat. This causes a bit of a trauma in their small son who witnesses it all; when he grows up, his mesmerizing mother, now armless like her "saint," tries to use him for her purposes. The symbolism, clear and otherwise, includes: a circus elephant dying, bleeding through its trunk; sex (there's a

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good deal of female undulation); and, inevitably, a dwarf.

The only interesting point about *Santa Sangre* is how old-fashioned it seems. This is the kind of daring that might possibly have stirred *tout Paris* in 1922. Today it all seems very dated. The religious hocus-pocus is dreary; and the assaults on bourgeois convention are milder than those in this week's cop picture, whatever it happens to be.

After last week's comment on American film importing, a note on American film exporting. Recently I came across an interview with Liv Ullmann and the Hungarian director Istvan Szabo, which they gave to *Le Monde* last winter and which was translated in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*. The occasion was the Festival of European Cinema, where Ullmann and Szabo had been jurors.

They both began by attacking the interviewer as a representative of the European press, which they say continually downplays European films and supports American hoopla. Szabo: "You take the line of least resistance by adding your own little voices to the massive chorus of approval organized by the American 'majors' when they launch the same movie all over the world." He calls such pictures "the filmic equivalent of fast food."

Ullmann, who concedes that some European films are self-indulgent, asserts that at least some European films "ask questions about our identity and our future," while American films "just seem gratuitous . . . violent and caricatural." She adds:

> It's hardly surprising that young Europeans, swamped with such films, are bored by European ones, which are much less standardized and more profound. I don't understand why the critics have abdicated their responsibilities. Their power to influence remains intact and they are free to pick and choose. So why do they play follow-my-leader?

It's not often that one sees critics—here Ullmann and Szabo are addressing European critics—called to account by film people for their spinelessness. As for the plaint about the difference between our films and theirs, it's certainly arguable: we all know of pluses and minuses on both sides of the Atlantic. Still, it's hard for an American not to feel a twinge of guilty recognition in the charges above. It's true that these charges by Europeans have often been made before, but that fact may be the grimmest aspect of the matter: insofar as the Ullmann-Szabo comments are just, they depict a long-standing state of affairs that may be getting worse. •

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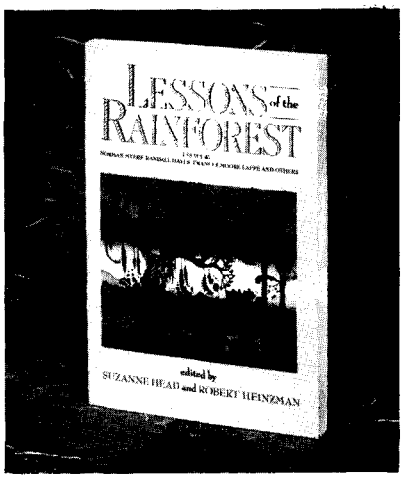

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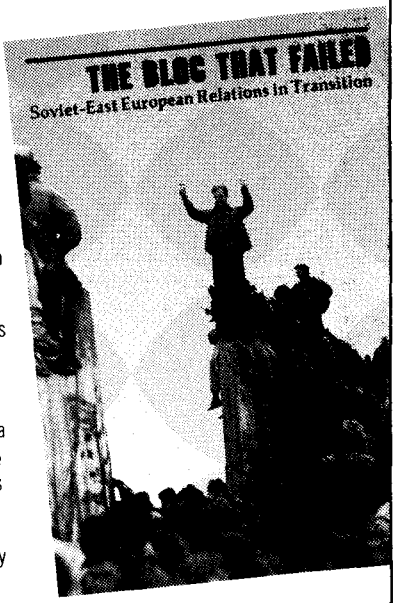

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Nature's four lessons for ecologists.

The Call of the Wild

BY EVAN EISENBERG

No one has told my cat about global warming. Last November, her first in the country, she grew a winter coat, something she never did in Manhattan. Her thighs were shaggy as a musk-ox's. The flea comb no longer plumbed her depths. When she groomed herself, she sounded like a rooting pig. The wildness in her, sprung from its dungeon, had already spoken up in a hundred ways that were fearful to watch and sometimes unpleasant to clean up. The new coat was the most striking thing, because it was so physical.

The rest of us here are obsessed with global warming. We knew all along that there was work to do on the Earth's behalf (and our own) and that much of it was urgent. Still, it seemed manageable. We would chip away a little at this problem, a little at that, and as more and more of us applied our chisels the shape of a sane planet would emerge. But now the solid material we have been working with seems to melt under our hands. Our problems multiply, ramify, run in rivulets of unpredictability.

Briefly, the facts are these. Over the past century, humankind has added large quantities of carbon dioxide, methane, halocarbons, nitrous oxide, and other "greenhouse gases" to the Earth's atmosphere. These gases let the Sun's energy in, but they do not let much of it out. All other things being equal, temperatures at the Earth's surface should rise as a result. But all other things are not equal: a skein of feedback loops involving cloud cover, ocean currents, even the activity of soil bacteria complicates things almost beyond imagining. Some of the loops are negative and will make things better, some are positive and will make things worse, and some have not yet declared their valence.

Add to this the lag in air temperature caused by the ocean's absorption both of carbon dioxide and of heat, and the possibility that we are due for an ice age in a few centuries, and you have some idea of the mess of entrails our seers must read. Elaborate computer models requiring quadrillions of calculations—but still primitive in relation to the problem—predict that if no action is taken, temperatures will rise an average of three to five degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2050, with wild variations (in rainfall and storms as well as temperature) from place to place.

EVAN EISENBERG is the author of *The Recording Angel: The Experience of Music from Aristotle to Zappa* (Penguin). He is at work on a book about man's role in nature, real and imagined.

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The numbers sound piddling until one remembers that the total global warming since the height of the last ice age 18,000 years ago has been about nine degrees F. A number of studies indicate that temperatures have already risen an average of one degree F. in the past century, which is roughly consistent with the computer models but also consistent with the possibility that they are dead wrong.

Supposing they are right, other models try to guess the effects: forest death, forest fires, extinctions of flora and fauna, drought in the world's breadbaskets, thawing of the polar ice caps, climbing sea levels, Venetian cities. Even the possible benefits of global warming (fewer winter illnesses, stimulation of crop growth by carbon dioxide, longer growing seasons in Russia and Canada) are likely to be tainted by social disruption, for we are talking about a rate of climate change far greater than anything mankind has yet seen. And there will be aggravating factors: farmers will have to deal not only with heat and drought but also with increased ultraviolet radiation (caused by ozone loss in the stratosphere), soil erosion, acid rain, and air pollution (such as ozone in the troposphere).

Oblivious, my cat grew a winter coat. The prospect of global warming would not have affected her plans for this past winter, which turned out to be rigorous (for one month, at least) in the accepted New England way. It affected my plans, ironically, by making me think harder about how to thicken the fur of my house. If I insulated better I would burn less wood and belch less carbon dioxide. Keeping warm in winter, I would do my bit to keep future summers cool.

That I am copying my cat does not bother me at all. With all this talk about the end of nature, it is good to be reminded that there is still a quantity of nature in each living thing and that we can learn from it. Is it true, as some think, that one smudged human thumbprint, one sour breath, is enough to denature nature? No truer than that one touch of nature is enough to naturalize civilization. The wildness in our genes and in the genes of our cats and cabbages affects civilization far more than our dams and dark emissions affect nature. As Wendell Berry has written, "We breathe and our hearts beat and we survive as a species because we are wild." We modify nature, but nature makes us from scratch.

The ancestor of our word "nature" is the Latin *natura* (from *nascor*, to be born), which glossed the Greek *physis* (from *phyo*, to bring forth or to grow). For the ancients, nature was the nature of something: of a tree, of the gods, of man. Nature could be opposed to convention, or to technology, but not to the human as such. It was not a realm unto itself; all life was shot through with it. If nature came also to mean physical law, that did not exclude man, either, as anyone could prove by jumping out a window.

In English, the opposition between man and nature first appears in the eighteenth century. It seems to have been at once a reaction against the coal mines and steel mills and a cause of them. By this time an intimate and remarkably stable marriage of man and the land had

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been achieved in northern Europe, much of which had been farmed productively for centuries. Now, in this continent-sized garden, sibilant promises of god-like power were heard. As industrialization paved over the garden, sensitive persons found refuge in remnants of wilderness—or in fantasies of a great wilderness across the sea. But the Romantic idealization of pure and untrodden nature only ratified the cold exploitation of whatever part of nature man did tread on. Part of the Earth would be stripped for food, clothing, and suspension bridges, and part would be reserved for the contemplation of poets.

The coolest exploiters of nature and its warmest defenders have had one assumption in common: that nature is one thing, mankind another. To the first, nature is inert matter that can be manipulated at will. To the second, it is a kind of anti-matter that vanishes at a touch, and so must be kept in special receptacles called parks or preserves.

Oddly, the rhetoric of "being part of nature" is common among extremists of both stripes. In one lexicon, being part of nature means abandoning our own nature—giving up the habits of delving, building, and transforming that, more in degree than in kind, set us apart us from other living things. In the other lexicon, being part of nature means doing what comes naturally to us, which as often as not is mindless exploitation. From this latter point of view, the fact that we are part of nature means that anything we do—no matter how ugly or willful or contorted—is, by definition, natural.

Neither side seems to appreciate the obverse of the fact that we are part of nature: namely, that nature is part of us. Another way of saying the same thing is that we have a nature—human nature—that is like and unlike that of any other thing. The Talmud advises that every man carry in one pocket a slip of paper reading, "For me the world was made" and in the other a slip reading, "I am but dust and ashes." It is dangerous to forget that we are part of nature, but equally dangerous to forget how different we are.

In recent years, one side of the antithesis I have been discussing has been commandeered by a movement that calls itself Deep Ecology. At the heart of the movement is the idea that humans have no right to a larger role in nature than raccoons. Instead of trying to remodel our earthly home, we ought to fade into the woodwork like the other residents. In strict practice this would mean reverting to the hunting and gathering that fed us for the first few million years of our hominid career, before agriculture let us breed like mice in a seed bag. It would mean returning most of the Earth to wilderness.

Of the movement's American manifesto, *Deep Ecology* by Bill Devall and George Sessions, which was published in 1985, even a convert such as Bill McKibben concedes that it "shows its West Coast origins at times." I would add that it shows its academic origins as well (Devall and Sessions teach sociology and philosophy, respectively). The product of ivory towers hidden in the redwoods, it is the only book I know that manages to be flaky and moldy at the same time, like a fine old Stilton. Its eclecticism—the best thing about it—helps it to be evasive. In setting out its vision of a humankind in harmony with nature, it is very discreet about the fact that such a humankind would be very, very small. Squirreled away in a dark crotch of the book, in a line from an interview with the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, is a target for world population. It is one hundred million. There is no discussion of how that target might be reached, but the fact that the movement's totemic philosopher, Martin Heidegger, was a Nazi gives one pause.

When it comes to politics, Deep Ecology is deep the way an ostrich's head is deep. The same can be said of Earth First!, in effect the movement's direct action branch. Inspired by Edward Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Earth First! specializes in acts of sabotage (disabling bulldozers, cutting power lines) in defense of wilderness. Although members of the group have shown great courage in acts of nonviolent resistance, they do have some questionable habits, such as the spiking of old-growth trees, which a few years ago caused the maiming of a sawmill worker. (Earth First! denied responsibility, claiming that it would not have spiked a stand without notifying the timber company. But spiking would have no bite if such accidents could not happen.) And they have some questionable ideas, such as the view expressed in the group's journal that AIDS is a good thing because it reduces the human population without harming the birds and bees.

A new book by Earth First! member Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization*, makes a surprisingly good case for some of the radicals' tactics, which have greatly increased the cost to industry of raping wilderness. He is unable, though, to show that they have a strategy—unless it is to keep some wilderness alive for the day when civilization

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"chokes on its own dung" (as one radical put it), after which a saving remnant of mankind can return to the idyllic lifestyle of the Pleistocene. "The time to make the choice between the natural and cultural world has come," Manes concludes, and it is lucky that this is his last sentence; it would have been awkward to have to make that choice while writing a book.

What about the other side of the antithesis? At the far end are the crazed futurists, the sort of people who would make cows legless milk dispensers, conveniently stackable, and replace sheep with tube-fed lamb-chop cultures hundreds of yards long. But this extreme is no longer worth talking about. The range of thoughtful discourse has shifted in an "ecological" direction: even the technocrats now admit that the planet is only so big and can take only so much abuse. Somewhat chastened, those who once tried to dominate nature now settle for managing it.

Planet Management has become the dominant worldview among scientists and policy-makers. It is the Fortran version of the Judeo-Christian ethic of stewardship, which sees the Earth as a garden that we are to dress, keep, and humanize. The finicky eye of God has been replaced with remote-sensing satellites that tell us, without moralizing, just where we stand. A good idea of how it all works may be had by leafing through the September 1989 special issue of *Scientific American* titled "Managing Planet Earth." Between the gaily colored advertisements in which major polluters express their commitment to a cleaner planet can be found advice on the management of water, air, population, energy, industry, economic development, agriculture, biodiversity, and climate.

The charts and the diagrams alone are enough to give a sense of the fearsome analytic guns these scholars pack. Much of their advice is excellent. If our leaders heeded it, the planet might stand a chance of getting through the next century in one piece. And yet there is something about the enterprise that rubs me the wrong way: an arrogant and mettlesome streak that is not only unseemly, but dangerous.

Not long ago I received a piece of junk mail from the Union of Concerned Scientists that asked, in hectic letters on the outside of the envelope: "IS OUR CLIMATE OUT OF CONTROL?" Had I stopped beating my wife? As far as I knew, our climate had never been under control. Certainly it had never been under mine. It had, perhaps, been under the control of the Earth itself, if one accepted some version of the "Gaia hypothesis" advanced by the atmospheric chemist James Lovelock and the microbiologist Lynn Margulis—the idea that the planet behaves like a single organism, maintaining temperature, oxygen concentration, the salinity of the oceans, and many other variables within the narrow limits that life requires. But that was not what the question on the envelope seemed to imply. It seemed to imply that if we were not now controlling the climate, we should be.

Climate is likely to be the fairy field on which, in the next decade and the next century, Deep Ecology and Planet Management (and other doctrines) will fight it out. The first skirmishers are in the bookstores. About a third of Bill McKibben's book *The End of Nature* comprises the clearest and most compelling summary of the problems of global warming and ozone loss that I have seen; in the other two-thirds he works out a Deep Ecology response to global warming. Or rather, to hear him tell it, the specter of global warming chases him into the arms of Deep Ecology against his will. Weather permitting, he would gladly go on living in the trusty Western way, with a warm house full of appliances and a car always ready to roam. But the weather does not permit that anymore.

McKibben does not think much of technical fixes. By concentrating on the kind of solutions proposed by the crazed futurists, such as covering the oceans with styrofoam pellets to reduce their absorption of sunlight, he makes all technical fixes sound repugnant. By arguing that, no matter what we do, it is too late to stop global warming altogether, he makes both technical fixes and government action sound hopeless. Instead, he pins his fainting hopes ("I hope against hope") on a sort of religious revival, a millennial fit of repentance such as the West has not seen in centuries. McKibben asks that we return to a "humbler" way of life, a "path of more resistance." What he has in mind is not hunting and gathering, exactly, but a Gandhian or Thoreauvian life of homesteading and abstemiousness. To begin, we can turn down the heat and air conditioning, mothball our cars, take long walks instead of airborne vacations, and stop having kids.

The Planet Manager's response to global warming is somewhat different. In *Scientific American*'s special issue, the article on global warming is the work of Stephen H. Schneider, who directs the interdisciplinary climate research program at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. One of the best-known exponents of the theory of global warming, Schneider is also the author of *Global Warming: Are We Entering the Greenhouse Century*? His writing cannot hold a candle to McKibben's, but his account of the scientific debate adds a good deal of light. It gives one a better grip on the kinds of uncertainties involved in climate modeling, a better feeling for the roller-coaster history of the Earth's climate. There is something about McKibben's elegiac tone that makes one hunger to believe the worst. Schneider's account, being far less vivid, allows the critical mind more play. (A good compromise between the two approaches is achieved in Jonathan Weiner's *The Next One Hundred Years*, which lays out the problem deftly and eloquently in an anecdotal, meet-the-scientists way. Although weaker on solutions and somewhat one-sided—we meet only scientists who are convinced of global warming—it may well be the best all-around introduction to the subject.)

For Schneider, global warming is not a spiritual crisis, but a problem in science and public policy. It is a problem to be managed. Admitting that global warming is not certain and that its extent and its results are wildly uncertain, Schneider puts his recommendations into two broad and overlapping classes. The first consists of "anticipatory adaptations," things we can do now that will help us adapt if and when global warming becomes a problem. The second category is made up of things that we would be wise to do anyway, for independent reasons, even if global warming fizzles out. Fortifying our cities to resist higher sea levels is an example of the first; improving our energy efficiency, of the second. Making our agriculture more diverse and adaptable falls into both classes.

A number of thinkers (Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, and Paul Shepard come to mind) have tried to steer paths of moderation between these two poles—between the teeth of wildness and the suction of total control. There is room for many such paths. The point is not to find a single way of thinking about nature, something we can stitch on a sampler and consult before stepping out the door each morning. Although Deep Ecology will never be a majority view, it tugs usefully on the sleeve of the majority view. The danger is that it may confuse more than it corrects—that its sometime heartlessness and frequent brainlessness may convince people that there is no sound alternative to what they are already doing. And the idea that nature has ended multiplies that

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danger a hundredfold.

The idea that nature has ended is not a tenet of Deep Ecology. That is no wonder; injected with it, the doctrine self-destructs. Yet it does seem to follow, in a way, from Deep Ecology's insistence that the only real nature is untouched nature. That is the path McKibben travels. He contends that by changing the makeup of the atmosphere, which in turn is changing the world's climate, we have ended nature. What might have been a truly useful book is swamped by that philosophical freight.

The nature McKibben is talking about is "independent" nature, a realm wholly apart from man. Unluckily, a fair number of people share his idea of nature (though many of them might call it wilderness instead). That idea of nature is a recent and baleful invention. Arguably, it is what got us into the mess we are in. Certainly it is unlikely to get us out of it, as McKibben himself concedes. "If nature has already ended," he asks, "what are we fighting for?" He has gently browbeaten his readers into accepting a concept of nature that will prevent them from working to save nature. (To save, I guess I should say, this green stuff that looks like nature.) We might still work to save our skins; but the easiest way to do that, McKibben admits, would be to resign ourselves to the end of nature and embrace its successor, a world wholly reconstructed and controlled by man—in other words, to abandon ourselves to our "defiant reflex."

Whatever one thinks of Deep Ecology, there is only one thing that could possibly impel anyone to adopt its precepts, and that is a love of nature. If nature is dead, then so is the way of life McKibben recommends. We are free to create the artificial world whose prospect makes his blood run cold. If nature does not exist, everything is permitted.

But there is no need to panic. If nature is ending, it has been ending for millennia. There may have been reaches of the northern hemisphere where no traces of DDT showed up in the 1960s, but there were no reaches where saber-toothed tigers or mastodons did show up. These and a host of other big animals had become extinct at the end of the Pleistocene era—partly because of the recession of the ice sheet and partly, many scientists think, because of the procession of well-armed humans across Eurasia and North America. To give a more general example, man-struck fire and other forms of deforestation have been changing the face of the Earth for a half million years. Since the global climate system is tightly coupled internally and highly sensitive to small disturbances (a trait meteorologists call the "butterfly effect"), it is likely that even small, local changes in the atmospheric mix caused by fire, such as more smoke and less water vapor, have long been affecting the day-to-day weather everywhere on Earth.

Indeed, the observation that human activities might be altering climate was made a century and a half ago by George Perkins Marsh and two centuries ago by Buffon. All organisms change their environment: if they did not, life could not exist. In general, the ones that change it most are the humblest—the unicellular organisms that decide the chemical composition of the oceans and the air. In this respect, man has more in common with the phytoplankton than with his fellow vertebrates. It is true that industrial man is changing the planet more quickly and dangerously than man or any other organism has done before (the best measure of this being species extinctions, not climate). But we can hardly judge the gravity of our present impact if we think that *any* impact is an aberration and a crime.

McKibben mentions in passing the argument that man is part of nature, that man like other animals has always altered his environment, that this is the most natural thing in the world. But to McKibben this is "a debater's point, a semantic argument." It is that for many of us, I think, only because we have so little first-hand or even secondhand knowledge of how humans get their livelihood from the Earth. We view nature through a window. Walking in the woods, we carry that frame with us, like the "Claude glass" that aesthetes of the eighteenth century used to transmute ordinary views into romantic landscapes. If a human figure stumbles into the frame, we shift the frame.

It would be hard to invent a better specimen of the strawberry-tinted view of nature common among the Deep Ecologists than the following excerpt from McKibben's book:

> North America, of course, was not entirely unaltered by man when the colonists arrived, but its previous occupants had treated it fairly well. In many places, it was wilderness.
>
> And most of it was wilderness still on the eve of the Revolution, when William Bartram, one of America's first professional naturalists, set out from his native Philadelphia to tour the South. . . . And not the dark and forbidding wilderness of European fairy tales but a blooming, humming, fertile paradise. Every page of Bartram's long journal shouts of the fecundity, the profligacy, of this fresh land. "I continued several miles [reaching] verdant swelling knolls, profusely productive of flowers and fragrant strawberries, their rich juice dyeing my horse's feet and ankles." When he

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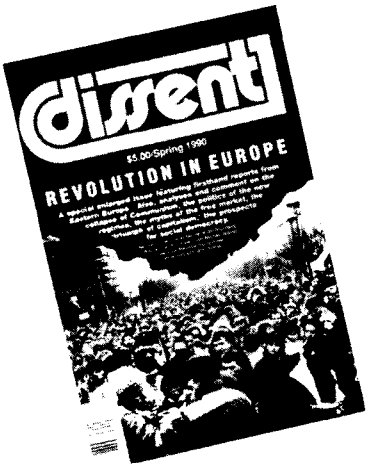

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stops for dinner, he catches a trout, picks a wild orange, and stews the first in the juices of the second over his fire.

First of all, much of the "wilderness" that Bartram traversed had been inhabited or hunted in for 12,000 years. The "verdant swelling knolls" were almost certainly the product of regular burning by the Indians, a practice that thinned the forest and opened up habitat for deer, birds, berries, and other things the Indians liked. This was conscious husbandry—so much so that a Spanish historian who spoke with an Indian captive got the impression that the deer were domesticated. Although the strawberries Bartram trampled were native, they were not a great deal wilder than commercial Maine blueberries, which are likewise stimulated by regular burning. Most likely the trout that Bartram ate were truly wild and unmanaged, for by a quirk of history most of the Southeastern Indians did not care for fish. But the oranges in whose juice he stewed them were not wild in the strict sense, but escaped from cultivation. Native to China, they had come to America with the conquistadors.

The Indians who lived in North America had indeed "treated it fairly well," but not by keeping hands off. The Deep Ecologists who now idolize the Indians have much the same view of them that the first white settlers had, which is to say, a racist view. The Indians (the settlers held) were children of nature. The land they had lived on for millennia still counted as wilderness and so could be claimed without qualm. It was "unimproved"; the whites would improve it. (Never mind that most of the first white settlements were on clearings the Indians had farmed for centuries.) The Indians had no history, or if they did it was "natural history." Their skeletons and arrowheads belonged in the same museum as the stuffed and mounted buffalo.

The mantle of the American Indian is one that many white intellectuals like to wear. The Deep Ecologists make free with Native American myths and rituals, but only those fitting their image of indigenes as invisible in the woods as fleas in fur. The Planet Managers respond that the Indians, like all other humans and all other organisms, changed their environment as much as their technology let them. Nature was sacred to the Indians, say the Deep Ecologists; was something they made use of, say the Planet Managers. As usual, the truth squats somewhere between these two positions. In the recent documentary film *The Wilderness Idea*, a Tuscarora Indian named Richard Hill observes that for the Iroquois, the whole universe was civilized; if anything, man was its least civilized citizen. "One of our chiefs said it best: 'The West didn't get wild until the white man got there.' "

By segregating man and nature we not only falsify the past; we also get confused about the future. Nowhere is the confusion more crippling than in our thinking about the greenhouse effect. The chapter in which McKibben celebrates Bartram's travels ends: "We have built a greenhouse, *a human creation*, where once there bloomed a sweet and wild garden." In that one convex sentence most of the book's flaws are magnified. What interests me most is the way the image of the garden has been enlisted on behalf of wilderness. After all, in real life a garden is as much a human creation as a greenhouse is.

In myth, things are different. A former *New Yorker* staff writer, McKibben now lives in or near the Adirondack State Park, the largest remnant of wilderness in the East. In describing his life there he revives, consciously or not, the myth of Eden—much as Bartram did in Florida. Acid rain, ozone loss, and global warming threaten to expel him and his helpmeet from this last paradise. He does not hold himself guiltless; most of his life he has lived like any good American. One year, he put 40,000 miles on his car. Our culture handed him the apple and he did eat.

For most people in most of recorded history, the garden has symbolized an ideal harmony of nature and culture. Such unanimity has been possible only because people did not agree about what the garden was. Each age and each nation has re-created the garden in its own image of that harmony. Conversely, each has imagined that harmony in the image of its own gardens. Some have leaned toward artifice, others toward wildness, but few have hesitated to raise the banner of the garden. Its dense weave of associations (art, Godhead, childhood, sex) has made it almost indispensable.

The greenhouse is a less sought-after symbol, or maybe a less promiscuous one. While the image of the garden hovers teasingly between nature and culture, that of the greenhouse seems to come down squarely on culture's side. The garden plays with nature, the greenhouse defies it. While the grandest outdoor garden must bow to the bullying of latitude, a greenhouse can thumb its nose.

Part of what oppresses us when we think about the greenhouse effect is the image we have of greenhouses. A greenhouse meant only to soften either end of a northern winter can, it is true, give the festive and cosseted feeling of a bedroom swathed in sun on a snow-clad Sunday. But the kind of greenhouse we think of when we think of global warming is the kind in which tropical plants are propagated, the kind that is humid and stifling. Which sensation will be closer to the reality of global warming will depend on where you are and who you are. For McKibben, what is oppressive in prospect is not the heat, it is the humanity—the thought of being penned up in "a human creation."

He may have been misled by his analogy. For while a deepening of the greenhouse effect would be a human creation, it would be an accidental one. (Here, as elsewhere, McKibben confuses influence with control.) Even the greenhouse that is a deliberate human creation is by no means as arrogant or unnatural as it is made out to be. The greenhouse defies nature in a gentle and modest way. It does not try to change the climate of the globe, or even of a knoll, but only of a few cubic feet of space. If it is arrogant and unnatural, then so is an anthill.

Nor is there anything unnatural about the greenhouse effect. It has been in place for aeons. Without it, Earth would be as chill and lifeless as Mars. Three-and-a-half billion years ago, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was probably hundreds of times greater than it is now; that is how the Earth was kept warm enough for life to emerge in the Sun's salad days, when that star was perhaps one-quarter less bright than it is now. The Earth has been shedding atmospheric carbon dioxide steadily, like a man peeling off layers of clothing as the morning warms up. The problem now is that humanity, like an overprotective mother, is adding layers. The expected result is global warming. That, if it happens, will in some sense be unnatural or artificial, but the greenhouse effect itself is not.

In fact, the greenhouse effect displays some of nature's most ingrained habits. Erwin Schroedinger, seeking to define life to a physicist's satisfaction, found its signature in the ability to resist entropy. Among other things, this can mean maintaining an energy gradient between inside and outside. The relevant inside can be the cell, the body, the dwelling, even (if the Gaia theorists are right) the planet. The art of maintaining such a gradient is in part the art of insulation; more broadly, it is the art of energy efficiency. The greenhouse effect embodies both.

Although no one has told my cat about the greenhouse effect, it is clear that she grasps the basic principle. Mammals are

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expert in the art of insulation, being distinguished by hair or blubber as well as by milk. Carnivorous mammals are doubly expert when it comes to energy efficiency (nap, pounce, nap). But every lifeform masters this art in some way, for none can afford to do otherwise. Only man, with his knack of fire, has had the luxury of getting sloppy about energy efficiency. And only modern man, sinecured by fossil fuel, has been able to slough off the discipline altogether.

We humans have always been proud of the privileges we have won and the shortcuts we have found. But when our shortcuts bring us to the edge of an abyss, it may be time to step back and study the subtler paths that nature generally takes. It may be time to swallow our pride and learn from cats. In what follows, I want to give some examples of things we can learn from nature that may help us contend with global warming.

In a sense, of course, all technology learns from nature. Even nuclear power might be described that way. (We have not only the non-living example of fusion in the Sun and the stars, but the living example of a bacterial community that, concentrating natural uranium 235 in a streambed in Gabon some 1.8 billion years ago, built a fission reactor that ran for millions of years.) Still, it is possible to make some distinctions. As Lewis Mumford long ago noted, industrial technology hit its stride only when it gave up copying organic forms and moved on to abstract mechanical operations. But Mumford, and after him Gregory Bateson, also noted that we have paid a stiff price for the power that our stiff mechanism conferred. Our linearity has caught in nature's throat. We have disrupted the non-linear cycles that sustain all life. If we can now penetrate to the abstract principles of the organic, a very different kind of technology may arise.

The Greenhouse Principle is the obvious place to start. Except in my capacity as mammal, I am not an expert on energy efficiency. But Amory Lovins, co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Institute and author of *Soft Energy Paths*, thinks that world carbon dioxide emissions could be reduced enough to abate global warming simply by the use of existing energy-conservation technologies, such as superinsulation, efficient engines, industrial heat recovery, materials recycling, and low-emissivity window coatings. As the last example makes clear, it is a matter of fighting the greenhouse effect with the greenhouse effect. In *Least-Cost Energy: Solving the CO_2 Problem*, a study first published in 1981 and just reissued, Lovins, his wife L. Hunter Lovins, and two German scientists argued that a planet industrialized to West Germany's 1973 level, with a population of eight billion and a gross product grown fivefold, could use one-third less energy than it uses now. The secret of this prestidigitation lies in the fact that efficient technologies would pay for themselves (some sooner, some later) in lower fuel bills. Far from requiring brutal government intervention or a gutted standard of living, the stabilization of global warming could be achieved by helping the free market get its hands on the right devices, which it is now prevented from doing by hidden energy subsidies and other political baffles. Other experts are less confident of this. Still, there seems to be wide agreement that the cheapest, quickest, and cleanest weapon against global warming, and therefore the one that should be deployed first, is energy efficiency.

Another thing we can learn from nature is the Principle of Circulation. In *Making Peace with the Planet*, a very intelligent example of the Planet Management approach, Barry Commoner recalls to duty the four "rules of ecology" he drafted almost two decades ago in *The Closing Circle*. The one I want to borrow is: "Everything has to go somewhere"—a rule that "expresses the fundamental importance of cycles in the ecosphere." In unhappy contrast, what Commoner calls the "technosphere" is dominated by linear processes. A one-way street runs from raw material to product, and the street is strewn with trash.

Looking back at those two decades of environmental effort, Commoner finds that the pollutants we have tried to limit by regulation and cleanup are still with us in force. Only when we have outlawed a pollutant altogether—and replaced the technologies that produced it—have our efforts paid off. Although Commoner is concerned mainly with old-fashioned pollutants of the toxic and noxious varieties, his argument applies almost as well to carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. In general, our linear technologies must be replaced with cyclical ones built on the premise that their products have to go somewhere.

In particular, fossil fuels must give way to renewable energy. The new solar thermal plants, in which sunlight heats oil that turns water into steam that drives turbines, are already as cost-efficient as late-generation nuclear plants. Photovoltaic, wind, and geothermal technologies are also coming down in price (despite the malign neglect of the Reagan years) and do not

312 MILLION PREGNANT IMMIGRANTS?

The Attorney General last December, on the President's instruction, informed the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization that in all refugee, asylum and deportation cases, an "applicant (who) has refused to abort or be sterilized. . .will now be considered to have established a well-founded fear of persecution . . ." This brings them under the purview of the Refugee Act of 1980.

The instruction was aimed primarily at China, and since the U.S. Government has already concluded that coercion is being practiced in China after women have had one child, it establishes a prima facie case for Chinese mothers to claim refugee status.

There are nearly 312 million Chinese women in their childbearing years. Add their husbands and children, and President Bush—without public discussion or an environmental impact statement—has qualified several hundred million Chinese and unborn babies for refugee status.

Let us hope that the rush does not start. The President has done just what President Carter did in 1980 when the Cuban boatlift began: put the decision in the other side's hands as to who will get onto the boats.

The President was engaged in a little power struggle with Congress—but it is dangerous to trifle with the nation's demographic future in the pursuit of such political games.

Congress is playing similar games. With the Morrison subcommittee in the lead, it is considering bills to increase immigration quotas, allow various Central Americans to stay here if they can get here, start a guest worker program, and expand the 1986 amnesty.

With natural increase alone, U.S. population size would be heading toward a gradual turnaround in the next two generations. Present immigration levels will send it past 333 million by 2080. These proposals could drive it explosively higher. We must learn to balance a natural sympathy for others (and the urge to score political points) with a sense of responsibility for the nation's future.

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Before we choose a crowded future through inadvertence, we should ask: how many Americans should there be? **NPG** is engaged in a new study of optimum population. On immigration policy, for example, labor economist Vernon Briggs concludes that the poor and the nation would benefit from selective rather than mass immigration, with fewer, better educated youths entering the labor force, and a consequent turnaround in population growth.

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release any greenhouse gases. Nuclear power does not, either, but it does produce radioactive waste that has to go somewhere and as yet has no safe place to go.

Since vehicles account for one-quarter of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions, the replacement of gasoline with ethanol and other fuels made from recent biomass (corn, sugar cane, algae, agricultural wastes) could make a major dent in global warming. As long as the biomass is constantly replaced, the principle of circulation is honored and there is no net addition of carbon dioxide to the air. (Care must be taken, however, not to stress an agriculture that already uses too many chemicals and loses too much soil.) Even something as atavistic as wood, if it comes from a properly managed woodlot, is preferable to fossil fuel.

Wood, too, releases carbon when it is burned, but the carbon has been captured from the atmosphere recently and can be captured again by new saplings. The carbon in coal (to take one kind of fossil fuel) was captured by the vast swamp forests of the Carboniferous period, whose like we will not see again until global warming has already ruined us. Locked up for millions of years, then abruptly released, it floods the carbon cycle—as if the dead should arise from their graves and enter the job market. Likewise, vast amounts of carbon locked up in tropical rain forests are now being released by burning, not for energy but simply to clear land. So we might add a corollary to the Principle of Circulation and call it the Pandora Principle: What nature has locked up should be unlocked only with the greatest caution.

By developing these new energy sources, we can not only lessen our own rude emissions of greenhouse gases (the United States owns one-twentieth of the world's lungs but exhales one-quarter of its carbon dioxide), but also help developing nations avoid our bad habits. Otherwise, we are likely to see ourselves caricatured on a global scale, with grotesque consequences.

The Principle of Diversity is another lesson nature teaches. How is it that my cat, raised in Manhattan walk-ups, knows how to grow a winter coat? Although she is a domestic animal, the wildness has not been utterly bred out of her. She still has some "ecological genes" in her, as a breeder would say, that let her adapt to changes in the environment. Her species as a whole, moreover, has a great deal of genetic variation in it, making it infinitely more adaptable than any individual cat could be. On a still higher level, the diversity of species within an ecosystem allows it to adapt to disturbances that might otherwise be fatal.

Diversity on all three levels, coupled with migration, should allow some ecosystems to adapt—at least in part—to global warming. Individual trees cannot migrate, of course, and forests migrate slowly; they may not move north as quickly as the climates they rely on. But just as we help cats migrate (for which they are rarely grateful), we can help forests.

The sterile plantations of cloned and irrigated trees that McKibben dreads—dendroids born of our "defiant reflex"—are not the only way. Like squirrels and bluejays, we are already agents in forest migration. That is perfectly natural—it is a good example of coevolution—and no less natural if we speed the process up. If and when it becomes evident that the maple and hemlock forest around me is expiring, and that the oak and hickory forest from the south will not arrive in time to take its place, I can take a stick and a bag of acorns and make my walks useful. Governments and organizations can do the same thing on a larger scale. And the more different kinds of seeds and seedlings we plant, the more likely it is that some of them will flourish under the new (and as yet unknown) local conditions that global warming may bring.

If the buildup of greenhouse gases that has already happened means that we are "committed" (consider the career of this word: insanity, politics, romance, and doomsday in just four decades!) to several degrees of global warming, then we shall have to adapt. And the key to adaptation, especially in the face of the unknown, is diversity. We must do everything we can to stanch the loss of diversity in flora and fauna, domestic as well as wild. The diversity of human ways of life must also be preserved, in fact multiplied, above all where food and energy are concerned. Diversity, like energy efficiency, is one of nature's fingerprints, as visible on the blown-glass surfaces of human culture as on a meniscus of seawater squirming under the microscope.

Diversity may prove useful not only in adapting to global warming, but also in stopping it. We do not know how the levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and thereby the Earth's temperature, are regulated (assuming that they are regulated, which some scientists dispute). But the "Daisyworld" computer models of James Lovelock, the creator (with Lynn Margulis) of the Gaia hypothesis, confirm what ecologists have long believed: that in natural systems, diversity promotes stability. (Although this principle has recently been challenged by Robert May and other chaos theorists, Lovelock argues in *The Ages of Gaia* that their models ignore the effect of the organism on its physical environment.) Each species we lose—and we are losing perhaps fifty a day—is a piece knocked out of the structure of our house. We do not know which ones are holding up the roof; in a sense, all of them are. A plantation of cloned trees may lock up as much carbon dioxide as a native rain forest, but its role in the larger mechanism that regulates carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is likely to be very different.

This brings us to a fourth thing we can learn from nature: the Principle of Self-Regulation, or sitting back sometimes and letting nature do the work. Learning from nature need not always mean imitating nature. It can also mean leaving big chunks of nature in place to do what they have evolved to do. We tend to think of nature as a warehouse of raw materials awaiting our shaping hand and animating breath. In the light of insights provided by the Gaia theorists, among others, nature now appears to be more like a greenhouse—an oddly commodious shelter in a cold and gasping universe.

One need not buy the Gaia hypothesis lock, stock, and barrel to see that many things in nature, from cells to ecosystems, tend to regulate themselves. While they do not, like a thermostat, regulate themselves exactly to human specifications, they do tend to keep themselves in a state of health that, in the long run, is better for the humans associated with them than a state of illness. What allows natural systems to regulate themselves is their wildness, the cleverness bred in them by natural selection. (In the case of an ecosystem or the biosphere, we are talking about the coevolution of the component parts, which can give the appearance of a selected whole.) When humans try to tailor nature to their own specifications, they generally trim off a good deal of that wildness. Nature loses some of its ability to regulate itself, and humans are forced to take over the job.

As I mentioned earlier, natural forests provide us with a host of free services, one of which is climate regulation. Plantations of cloned or otherwise uniform trees, bare of understory, deadfalls, and most wildlife, may be able to take over some of those services, but probably not many, and not without constant human supervision. Another good example can

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be found in agriculture. Drawing inspiration from forests and prairies, as well as from the canny peasant agricultures still to be found in some corners of the world, a growing number of researchers are trying to bring farming a little closer to the nature from which it was untimely ripped a hundred centuries ago. Wes Jackson in Kansas, Bill Mollison in Australia, Masanobu Fukuoka in Japan, the New Alchemists on Cape Cod, and even some respectable academics are working to create systems that display all four of the things we want to learn from nature: energy efficiency, cyclicality, diversity, and self-regulation.

By reducing the amount of fossil fuel burned in tractors and applied to the soil (some of whose products, in either case, end up in the atmosphere), these systems can help to slow global warming. (They also lend themselves to local food production, which reduces the fuel burned in shipping.) By cooperating with native flora and fauna rather than erasing them, they leave some natural systems in place, which again may (we cannot be certain) help slow global warming. They are likely to adapt better than industrial agriculture to drought, ultraviolet radiation, pest invasions, and other imponderables of atmospheric change. And while industrial agriculture will need constant adjustment, much of it in the form of expensive genetic engineering, the wildness in some of these alternative systems may allow them to evolve, to some degree, on their own.

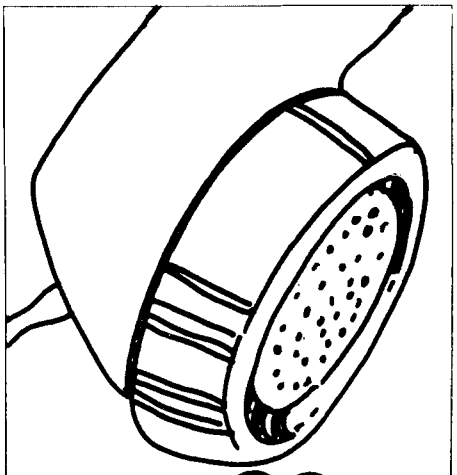
Although stabilizing global warming may be the toughest environmental problem we have ever faced, the answers are at hand (provided, of course, that no chain of positive-feedback loops jerks the problem out of our hands and into the realm of fatality). We do not even need to draw a pentagram on the floor and summon the nuclear and genetic engineers. The answers are not easy, but they are not horrible or unnatural or Procrustean.

Let us come back for a moment to McKibben's prescriptions, at least his first steps. He and his wife are driving less, traveling less, keeping less warm (they strive to keep the temperature in winter at fifty-five degrees), and trying "very hard not to think about how much we want children." Although swearing off reproduction altogether strikes me as a shade overheroic (and a good way of breeding heroism out of the population), most of the things McKibben is trying to do are things we should all be trying to do. He is not sanctimonious about them; he twits himself for his inconsistencies.

In his eagerness to feel the lash for our sins, though, McKibben forgets that there are smarter ways of making amends. Instead of keeping your house at fifty-five, you can superinsulate, using new techniques that cut fuel use by ninety percent. Instead of taking fewer or colder showers, you can put a solar heating panel on your roof, or get (if you can find it) the kind of water heater many Europeans and Japanese use, which heats water as needed by running it through coils rather than keeping a full tank simmering all day. Instead of renouncing travel, you can take the train. And you can agitate for cars that are more fuel efficient (while the EPA standard stagnates at 27.5 miles per gallon, Toyota and others have prototypes that get over 100) or that use some kind of "soft" energy (an electric van now going into production will release from power plants only a third as much carbon dioxide as an average gas-powered van releases from its tailpipe). The power we can exercise outside the voting booth, not only by consuming less but by consuming products that are environmentally benign, is a giant just stretching its limbs.

So far, "green consumerism" has been fairly superficial (despite the book-jacket increase in the number of simple things we can do to save the planet from fifty to 101, 750, and now 1001). Without encouragement from above it is likely to stay that way. Cars are a case in point. As James Fallows recently noted, we could impose a 100 percent tax on gasoline and still pay only half what Japanese motorists do. Our gas mileage standards are laughable. Mass transit will not be a serious alternative for most Americans until the federal government makes a commitment to a large and convenient system, as Europe and Japan have done. We need to prod, by direct investment and tax incentives, the development of new fuels and new engines. As Michael Oppenheimer and Robert H. Boyle observe in *Dead Heat: The Race Against the Greenhouse Effect* (a book well stocked with policy recommendations): "While government isn't exactly the mother of invention, it certainly can act as the midwife."

Similar tactics can be applied to power generation, agriculture, construction, and so on. In some enterprises—such as tree planting on a massive scale to absorb carbon dioxide, and stepped-up research into global warming and its effects—the federal government can also act directly. The argument that economic growth may be slowed does not impress me, since economic growth in its present form is part of the problem. The measures called for are not Draconian, as



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the economists like to pretend. They might instead be called Solonian, after the later Athenian legislator who, when the soil of Attica was being eaten away by grain and goats, made laws encouraging the culture of olives and grapes.

Invoking such a name reminds us how sorely we need real leadership, not only at home but in the international arena. The World Bank and our own lending and granting agencies must be made to invest in projects that (unlike vast dams and roads into the Amazon) are at the very least environmentally benign. Debt-for-nature swaps are a dandy idea, so long as we are careful to respect both sovereignty and dignity; but any kind of debt reduction can help reduce the pressure on rain forests and other ecosystems caught in the hinged jaws of hunger and debt. To relieve such pressure and foster sustainable development is not charity, it is self-preservation. The nations of the world are linked now like mules on a mountain pass. If the weakest stumble and fall, the others will follow.

Unlike the Lovinses, I think that some belt-tightening in the wealthy nations will be called for. The exact mix of cutting back and technical fix is partly a matter of public policy and partly of personal taste. Some may think that superinsulation is unnatural (though they would have trouble convincing an otter or a musk-ox of this) and prefer to shiver a little. If the hair shirt fits, I say, wear it. But in general what is needed is not to live poorer but to live smarter. For our species to try to insulate itself from the scrabbling and squashing that is nature would be the most unnatural thing of all. We cannot walk on air, but we can look where we are treading.

This is not to say that I join the Planet Managers in swelling with adrenaline at the prospect of adventure ahead. If we see global warming as yet another challenge, yet another chance to show our stuff, we are bound to make yet another hash of things. The Planet Managers plan to manage the planet on the best ecological principles. Everything will be different this time, they assure us; this time we know what we are doing. Of course, that is what we thought last time.

Perhaps we should think of the management we have to do as hands-off management: giving as free a rein as practicable not to humans (the time for that is long past), but to nature. Many of the Planet Managers do think in these terms, even if their jargon sometimes clouds the fact. Restoring stricken ecosystems, preserving genetic diversity (especially when this is done in situ rather than in vitro), controlling human population—all these are ways of keeping wildness alive and letting it work.

But the Planet Managers believe that, in a world with anything like our present population and technology, human intervention will be needed not only to get wilderness going, but to keep it going. The Deep Ecologists believe this, too—at least the sane ones do—but conclude that we must therefore reduce both our numbers and our technological level. In other words, rather than keep wilderness in an oxygen tent, we must back off and give it room to breathe. And while they may take it too far, I think they have a point.

Their point is brought home — unwittingly — by Commoner's chapter "Population and Poverty." Pooh-poohing the zeal for population control that has become an article of faith among environmentalists, he argues that the notion of carrying capacity is meaningless when applied to a planet run by clever humans:

> In an abstract sense, there is a global "limit to growth," but this is determined not by the present availability of resources, but by a distant limit to the availability of solar energy. . . . That distant limit is irrelevant to current policy. . . . The question is whether we can produce bountiful harvests, productive machinery, rapid transportation, and decent human dwellings sufficient to support the world population without despoiling the environment.

The answer, of course, is yes—provided we take Commoner's advice.

His view of population growth is not quite so cavalier as that; he takes the line that economic development will at some point (the "demographic transition") stabilize population more or less automatically. Still, I am troubled by his denial of limits, by his vision of a planet wholly humanized: a vast organic garden spangled with appropriate machines. For an ecologist, Commoner is oddly silent here about such matters as species extinctions and the loss of wilderness. With the best intentions and the best technologies, large numbers of humans weigh heavily on the ecosystems they invade. Farming, even the organic farming that Commoner favors, takes up space. If there is one thing ecologists have learned in recent years, it is that wilderness cannot be kept in boxes. Even in big boxes, it withers and dies. Gene pools stagnate, species vanish, ecological services fall into abeyance. The smaller the boxes, the more frantically they must be managed to retain even a semblance of life.

In his earlier book *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, Lovelock speculates on what would happen

> if, at some intolerable population density, man had encroached upon Gaia's functional power to such an extent that he disabled her. He would wake up one day to find that he had the permanent lifelong job of planetary maintenance engineer. . . . Then at last we should be riding that strange contraption, the "spaceship Earth," and whatever tamed and domesticated biosphere remained would indeed be our "life support system."

Lovelock guesses that, at the present rate of per capita energy use, a human population of ten billion would still be living in "a Gaian world." At some unguessable point beyond that, we would be on our own.

The optimism of the Planet Managers has been shaken by global warming, and that may be a good thing. We need to be taken down a peg. Whether we need to be ground under the heel of a brutal and now somewhat deranged nature (or ex-nature) is another matter. Recoiling from control, which he thinks impious, McKibben wants to renounce influence as well, which cannot be done. I think he is right to recoil from control. The total control promised by some—all the Earth a formal garden, or a tight and tidy spaceship—is impious; worse, it is tedious. It is an ancient dream, but a bad one. If the Deep Ecologists want to cuddle up in a childhood memory of Eden, the Planet Managers want to grow up, but with a vengeance: to become not only their own fathers, but the fathers of all life.

I would like to believe that nature will always elude total control—that the dream of absolute power is not only impious and tedious, but fatuous. At the same time, I would like to believe that just as we can never wholly subjugate nature, so nature can never wholly abandon us. Hopkins wrote:

> Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
> And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
> And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
> Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
>
> And for all this, nature is never spent;
> There lives the dearest freshness deep down things . . .
> Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
> World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Holy Ghost or no Holy Ghost, I am encouraged in this belief by trivial miracles like my cat's winter coat. If, as the climate models suggest, she and her progeny have to trade it in eventually for something lighter, I like to think that the services of Genentech will not be required—that wildness, if we can keep it alive, will take care of itself. •

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Kiss and Tell

By Hermione Lee

Deception
by Philip Roth

(Simon and Schuster, 208 pp., $18.95)

The woman whose love affair with "Philip" is the story of Philip Roth's cunning and seductive new novel of adultery threatens to take revenge with her own novel, which will be called *Kiss and Tell*. Go ahead, says her lover/author, do what you like, feel free. He knows he's safe, because he, after all, made her up: she can only kiss and tell if he lets her. We've been here before, sort of. Maria left Nathan Zuckerman at the end of *The Counterlife* because she didn't want to be locked into his fiction anymore. What she found "diabolical" was that when Maria appears to be most "real," most "her own woman" in Nathan's book, she is least real, "just one of a series of fictive propositions." But Maria's protest is itself a "fictive proposition." And when the "real" woman in *Deception*—the model for Maria in *The Counterlife*—threatens to kiss and tell, we can be sure that she won't be allowed to. She can have no freedom outside the author's version. Her counterlife isn't one of his fictive propositions. *She* cannot betray *him*.

This is partly a matter of temperament. She is a nice, well-brought-up English woman who has "very muddled, complex feelings . . . about the whole business of self-exposure and the different kinds of betrayal." "Betrayal?" says the author coolly, not at all muddled himself by the charge—the same old charge—of having stolen her "real" life for his fiction. Betrayal, he says, is too "overpowering" a charge. There was no contract that he would "forswear" his art for love. To "forswear" is itself a word loaded with treacherous meaning. It means "renounce"—and renouncing is one of the subjects of the novel—but it also means "betray." What he will not betray is his profession.

In this novel, which is all speech, betrayal is repeatedly spoken of. You are a treacherous bastard, says an enraged Czech, accusing the author of fucking his wife. Cool as ever, the author replies: "Don't extend your sense of betrayal to me." When his wife reads the novel we are reading and takes it literally as evidence of his adultery, he attacks her for being not a jealous wife, but a stupid reader. (Compare Maria, also the reader of the novel we are reading in *The Counterlife*: "On first reading I took it all rather literally, as a bad critic would take it.") But the husband/author does acknowledge the charge of "a sort of perverse betrayal," to the extent that he sat in their bedroom, while his wife was sleeping, and made up "little conversations" with his "imaginary woman." But she's a real woman! says this imaginary wife in anguish. No, says her author, you are deceived; and if you insist on reading my book literally, that is a betrayal of my art. He turns the charge of "betrayal" back against her; but he accepts—in fact, he welcomes—the charge of "deception."

So, though betrayal features insistently, the title is deception. And this isn't just because Harold Pinter got there first, but because their subject is different. When Pinter called his play of adultery *Betrayal*, and made us read the action retrospectively from the end back to the beginning of the affair, he brilliantly imitated the rewriting of the past that betrayed lovers have to endure, and all the different aspects of betrayal that such a retrospect exposes. Roth, not a devotee of Proust like Pinter, isn't as drawn to the logistics of adultery: to the strategies for concealment, the ironic coincidences, the accidental disclosures, the sickened enlightenings, the repetitions.

He does give, through the novel's voices, a tender and vivid sense of the artificial, pleasurable, short-lived enclosedness of a secret affair in a single room: the phone calls, the afternoons, the little jokes, the greetings and partings, the talking between fucking, the slight shifts of mood. Still, it's not adultery as sexual or social plot that he is primarily intrigued by, it's adultery as the occasion for authorial deception. The differences between betrayal and deception are pertinent. Betrayal is an act, deception is a craft. Betrayal is a crime, deception is a practice. Betrayal is exposure, deception is concealment. This book isn't nearly so much about adultery as it is about writing.

"Let's see how much attention you've been paying," the lovers say to each other. You seem to hear the author saying the same thing to the reader. The structure of *Deception* is itself deceptive, as elegant and ingenious as *The Ghost Writer* or *The Prague Orgy*. It requires attention, in that it looks improvised but is in fact very formally mapped. It is in fourteen sections (though you don't notice this), each of which is a dialogue with the author. There is the barest minimum of narrative, in the form of banal stage directions ("Laughing," "After he comes," "Crying"), as if to say that it is not in narrative commentary that clichés of sexuality can be subverted. This lover/author is not interested in out-Updiking Updike with the pyrotechnics of stylistic intercourse. No glitter of pubic hair, no moist interstices, no moaning and heaving here: this is strictly aural sex.

The dialogues alternate, in careful balance, between the love affair and seven other conversations: with a deracinated Czech girl; with the Czech husband; with a "crazy" American girl who is the author's ex-student and ex-lover; with a Czech woman who has left her English husband; with a woman, also an ex-lover, who is being treated for cancer; with a Polish woman translator; with the author's wife. These voices, speaking on a scale of pain that moves from furious bafflement to stoic gaiety, stand in a tangential relationship to the main story. At first they seem mostly like counterpoint, letting in contrasting registers of emotion.

The alternating dialogues of the love affair begin with a questionnaire, to be filled in by both applicants for adultery, which establishes the terms of their involvement. ("Who am I and why is it all right?") In the questionnaire, it's hard to tell who is speaking, and this intimate interchangeability continues. The dialogue is playful, attentively reciprocative, quiet. The reader, at the keyhole, listens in with the illicit curiosity and pleasure you feel when you get a crossed line on the phone. Talking is sexy, and so is listening. In *The Counterlife*, Nathan is imagined as unable to make love to Maria, so that, instead, "they never stop talking. . . . I expose myself to her voice as though it were her body. . . . Maria's voice, her talking tongue, is the sole erotic implement." She calls it "the purest form of eros. . . . That endless, issueless, intimate talk."

Here it recurs, and, as with all talk between lovers, there's a great deal of recurrence in it. The text works like musical notation, repeating themes, introducing variations, sometimes just playing a few notes of the main tune:

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"You're trembling. Are you ill?"
"I'm excited."

"I listen to you a lot, you know."
"Too much. Why do you?"

This sexual/textual play is brilliantly controlled, and extremely manipulative. As always in Roth, it is serious play. Through the texture of the love affair we hear the painful story of her humiliating marriage, her inability to leave it, her unhappy attempts at therapy, her decision to renounce the affair. In short, she comes across as a terrible mess.

Matching her story of entrapment is his story (or as much of it as he chooses to give away) of cultural displacement, a set of mischievous diatribes that read as footnotes to *The Counterlife*. There is some coat-trailing going on here. You don't like this? says Roth. Well, here's more. So *Portnoy's Complaint* was born of the accusations of being a bad Jewish boy in *Goodbye, Columbus*, and Nathan Zuckerman came out of the shock waves from *Portnoy*. So Nathan plays victim of *Carnovsky's* fame, kike pornographer, parent-slayer, diasporan liberal in Zion, bearded alien amid the English corn. These books are all reactive.

And, increasingly, they are reactionary as well. There may be soft feelings in the private realm, but there is no tolerance for soft thinking in the public domain. The targets are delicate ones, brutally handled: "creeps who want to raise handicapped children," feminist objections to his exploitation of women, the xenophobia and the parochialism of suburban Britain, the anti-Semitism of the fashionable English left. Dinner parties in London's SW3 with "Philip" (or Philip) must have been furious occasions, as "Philip"/Philip argued over Israel, Cuba, Nicaragua, and America's right to bomb Japan. We seem to have come a long way from the anti-authoritarianism of the Nixon satire in *Our Gang*. Still, the targets aren't dissimilar. When the mistress of *Deception* expresses surprise, after reading his books, at his obsession with Jews, he replies succinctly, "Read 'em again." And if you read 'em again for the politics, you find that the butts of Roth's satiric rage have always been cant, hollow rhetoric, and fashions in lazy thinking. In this novel about speech, anger at false language is apt.

But there's a worrying development. From *Portnoy* to *The Counterlife*, the antagonists—in America, in Israel, in England—could be heard, loud and frenzied. In *Deception*, strong arguments and oppositions are reported, but not heard. And in the lovers' dialogue no contradictions are brooked. Unlike Maria, who argues forcibly against Nathan's obsessions in *The Counterlife*, here the woman speaks her author's thoughts or acts out his version of things. Challenged to disagree with him, she replies: "I wouldn't dare." Anyone who disagrees is stupid.

This is gratuitous provocation for feminists, anti-Semites, and left-wing English intellectuals, guaranteed to give offense, like saying "Jew" in a loud voice in an English restaurant. (Like Maria, I think that this piece of Zuckermanthropology says more about Roth's paranoia than about British prejudice, but I could be biased.) Yet the provocation, characteristically, forms part of the novel's serious argument, which is about displacement and freedom.

"So our love story isn't a love story really—it's a cultural story. That's the one that interests you," says the mistress. "You're kind of the Albert Schweitzer of cross-cultural fucking." The self-exiled American Jewish author, balked and frustrated by England and Englishness, tries to make himself less alienated through the affair with the nice English woman. But the affair ends partly because she confirms his feeling that England is not for him. Unlike Nathan Zuckerman, who is left at the end of *The Counterlife* in an English pastoral, sitting beside the Thames, a Jew among gentiles, "Philip" goes home to streets full of New York Jews, bursting over with "anger, insult, argument, and impudence." He realizes that he never got free of the tribe, just as she never got free of her marriage.

But "What's free?" the lovers ask each other. These voices, which seem to be speaking freely, are all obstructed. That's why the crossed lines of the Eastern European voices and the voices of the two "sick" women friends, one mad and one ill, cut into the sound of the love affair. Roth took here what may (happily) have been his last chance to write again about the stories that come out of the obstruction of Eastern Europe. As in *The Prague Orgy*, he listens to speakers who, "silenced, are all mouth," and whose "orgy" is of speech, not sex. The emigré Czech girl tells a cryptic horror story of having been used by the regime as a spy and a prostitute. The girl from Prague who married an Englishman finds herself alone and totally "misplaced." The Czech husband loses his aristocratic Czech wife to a black American. The Polish girl illustrates how "very unsecure" she feels in England with a vivid story of a heartless London rush hour. In the "free world," the blockages come from within. The paranoid clever American ex-student has been through shock therapy and a terrible, preyed-upon sex life. There's no escape from herself: "That's been my nemesis." For all her courage and style, the ex-lover who is dying of cancer has now been entirely taken over by her symptoms and treatment.

The author, all ears, a "talk fetishist," gets *his* freedom, and his gratification, from their stories. They unlock him, take him out of the prison of self. The climax of sexual excitement ("You're dazzling! Go on, go on!") comes when the lovers play "reality-shift." She pretends to be the biographer of Roth's characters, Lonoff and Zuckerman, while he pretends to be . . . himself. The biographer, a wonderful invention ("I can do Zuckerman in two years. I need a hundred thousand bucks if we're going to buy a bigger co-op and there's no other writer I can do this fast for that kind of dough"), got thoroughly fed up with Lonoff's costive prohibitions, but he's having just as much trouble with Zuckerman's multiple personalities: "What interests him is the terrible ambiguity of the 'I', the way a writer makes a myth of himself. . . . Where do they come from, all these improvisations on a self?"

That is Roth's essential subject. You might not think there was any mileage left in it. But this latest improvisation, in one further twist, presents the author as "himself." The women are not named, but the author is "Philip" (and he has a friend, just as real, named Aharon Appelfeld). The wife begs him not to name himself, to turn "Philip" into "Nathan,"

The Remarkable Objectivity of Your Old Friends

We did right by your death and went out,
right away, to a public place to drink,
to be with each other, to face it . . .

We called other friends—the ones
your mother hadn't called—and told them
what you had decided, and some said

what you did was right; it was the thing
you wanted and we'd just have to live
with that, that your life had been one

long misery and they could see why you
had decided that, no matter what we
thought about it, and anyway, one said,

most of us abandoned each other a long
time ago and we'd have to face that
if we had any hope of getting it right.

LIAM RECTOR

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so as not to expose her. He explodes in carefully apposite fury: "Jesus Christ, *is* this Eastern fucking Europe?" The writer must be free to name himself, to break the taboo that attaches to betrayal. Discretion, shame, scruples are not for him.

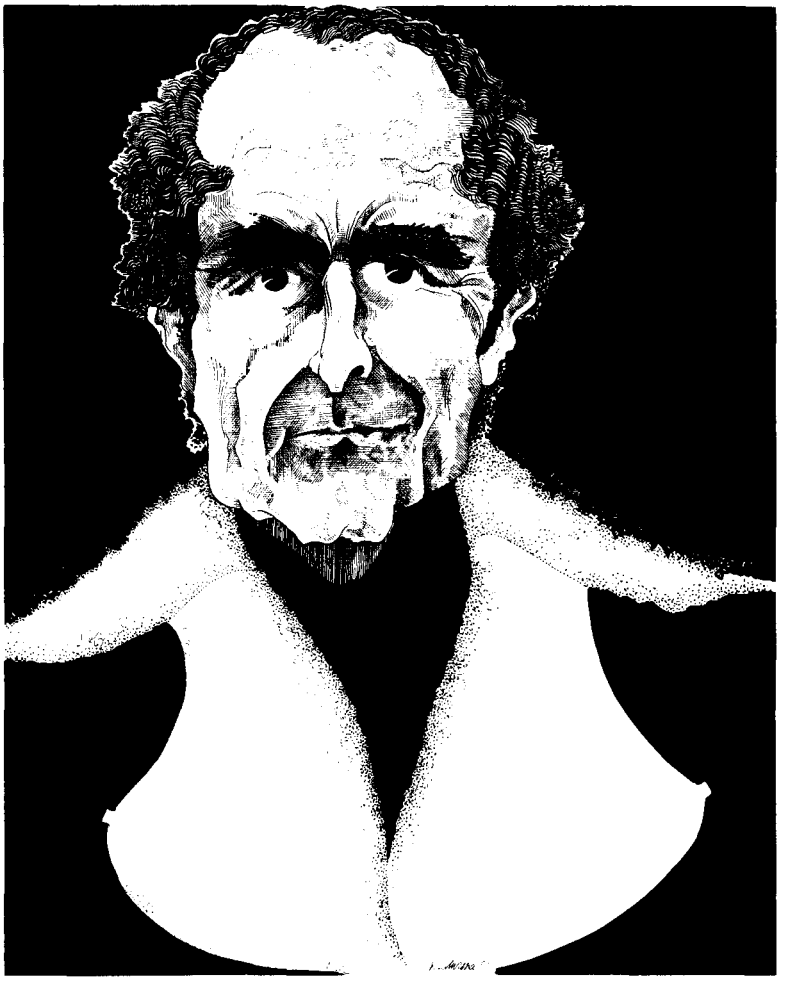
What "Philip" has decided to write here is the notebook that became the novel *The Counterlife*. Roth's previous book, *The Facts*, began by his saying that "the facts have always been notebook jottings, my way of springing into fiction." Suffering from "fiction-fatigue," he chose there to go back to the facts. But fiction-fatigue seems to have been cured, and now the "notebook jottings" are being turned into their own form of fiction. It's a "preemptive strike" against the reviews:

> I write fiction and I'm told it's autobiography, I write autobiography and I'm told it's fiction, so since I'm so dim and they're so smart, let *them* decide what it is or it isn't.

So, in the interests of the writer's freedom, betrayal is transformed into deception.

But because Roth never leaves his own arguments unanswered, this deliberate aesthetic is rudely challenged by the one other male speaker, the Czech who accuses "Philip" of fucking his wife:

> You fucked her for her stories. . . . You get them into bed to talk to them. . . . You like it best when these soulful women can't actually tell their own tales but struggle for access to their story. . . . And then you listen and rush to write it down and then you ruin it with your fictionalizing.



PHILIP ROTH BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The charge of sexual betrayal is refuted, but the charge of appropriation remains unanswered. "Philip" is alarmingly in charge here, much more in charge than Nathan ever is. Nathan is the author's stooge, victim, agent provocateur and fall guy, as well as his alter ego. Nathan is—often and sensationally—frantic, driven, humiliated, beside himself. But "Philip" is controlled, wise, authoritarian. He is the interrogator, who makes all the voices speak. He is the teacher, intermittently giving witty and subtle lectures on *Madame Bovary* or Kafka. He is the lawyer, setting up a novelist's defense. He is the doctor, treating his cases.

He is the patient also (the idea of illness and its curability runs all through this book, as through many of Roth's books), who cures himself through writing. And he is the philosopher who gives wise advice on freedom. "My sweet girl," he tells his lover, "the message is that you have an option. . . . The next step . . . is known as taking your life in hand." But her life is in his hands. He lets her go, but allows no "letting go." The ultimate deception of this novel has to do with freedom: Roth is the authoritarian author, masquerading as one who gives permission. It is a dazzling and disturbing performance, a mischievous, enticing, exasperating tease.

Roth, of course, has always been a teasing writer. *The Counterlife* (the great novel of his middle years, compared with which *Deception* is a prank) teases us continually out of our desires for narrative security, our prejudices, our assumptions. The teasing in *Deception* is a more dubious enterprise, as its discreditable packaging suggests. On the cover, in tasteful, prurient soft focus, as through a peephole, we see a masterful male hand tenderly enclosing a naked female waist, buttocks coyly half-covered by a dainty lace-edged sheet. The blurb promises us "the most provocative novel about the erotic life since *Portnoy*."

This is one kind of tease, of the reader as voyeur. The titillated consumer, going for his checkbook in the hopes of some classy soft porn, finds himself let in for a more cerebral form of gratification than he expected. A naughty deception. The other kind of tease is directed at the reader as gossip. If "Philip" is Philip, then *who is she*? The wife may be criticized for stupidity in asking this question, but the novel lures us on to be that stupid. I couldn't help resenting this, and felt there was too much winking and nudging going on.

To be teased is annoying. To be coerced is frightening. In Roth's most dazzling work, from *Portnoy* to *The Ghost Writer* to *The Counterlife*, the vociferous uncontrolled world out there tugs against, and pours into, the voice of the subject. The counterlives are as potent as the tactics of appropriation. But the voices of these women are not as energetic, independent, or interesting as, say, the voice of "Philip" talking to his father, who makes one exuberant and welcome guest appearance here, bitterly complaining about his grandson marrying a Puerto Rican. I'd rather hear this than Maria complaining again of ill-treatment from her awful English husband.

What do you want then? Roth might well reply. Women do complain about their husbands, they do take lovers, their affairs do end—and, for that matter, some of them do enjoy a tender, masterful hand on their naked waists. Well, OK. But, however eloquently Roth cites Flaubert, there's no Emma Bovary here. I never believe that these women would go on speaking and being if "Philip" were not there to switch them on and off in his own interest.

"Close your eyes," says the lover to his mistress, teasingly:

> "Uh-oh."
> "Close 'em."
> "I am not going to be tied up."
> "My dear friend, who here ever suggested tying you up this early in the game?"

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"I've read about it in books."
"So?"
"Writers write those books."
"Close your eyes."
"If I must."
"Let's see how much attention you've been paying. Describe this room."
"To begin with, it's far too small for two people to conduct a love affair in."

That playful, affectionate interchange is ominous, too: he *does* tie her up. "Writers write those books," and some writers go in for bondage, where their characters are concerned. And the room, the space of the book, *is* too small. It's as small, she points out (in an analogy I found hard to swallow), as the attic in which Anne Frank's family was "holed up":

"Well, that's what we're stuck with."
"I suppose. This is life."
"There is no other."

"Philip" is holed up in the little space of his own life: "there is no other." Like Kafka (as one of the women is made to observe), he has long gone beyond "translating experience into fable—he's imposing his fable onto experience." That has always been the complaint against—and the genius of—this writer, and that is why he matters so much. To get off the ship, to get out of the burrow, to be other than the self, to get inside a counterlife: that's the game, and it's in deadly earnest. In *The Ghost Writer*, Nathan riskily and irreverently set Anne Frank free in his imagination, to get himself out of the fix of being the good Jewish writer who's the bad Jewish son. This time the attempt to escape the little room is made through the erotic game of listening and transcribing, a game whose treachery subtly mimics the sexual betrayal of adultery. But as the game ends there is sadness, for lover, author, and reader. The writer looks back on the book of "our life, as it might have been," but is left still solipsistically mulling over the notebooks of his single life, holed up inside a ghetto of one, bound in between his own two ears.

HERMIONE LEE is the author of *Willa Cather: Double Lives* (Pantheon).

Critic's Return

BY IRVING HOWE

The Portable Malcolm Cowley edited by Donald W. Faulkner

(Viking, 586 pp., $21.95)

Had Malcolm Cowley done nothing in the course of his long career but edit *The Portable Faulkner* (1946), he would have earned a place of honor in the history of American letters. By improvising a loosely woven narrative of Yoknapatawpha County out of Faulkner's books, he not only brought back into print some portions of major novels; he also made clear the thematic unity and moral gravity, as both reflection and criticism of the Southern myth, in the work of the greatest American novelist of our century. It's easy enough to say this about Faulkner in 1990, but not many people were saying it a half century ago, and Cowley deserves a lot of credit for consolidating Faulkner's reputation.

Unlike a good many academic critics today, Cowley wrote from the premise—I take it to be one of the few unassailable premises of literary criticism—that it is the work of the writer that is primary and the work of the critic that is secondary. The critic's job, difficult enough, is to describe the poem or fiction, and then to venture some historical placement and judgment of value. (In practice these tasks are often simultaneous and inseparable.) That done, the critic should noiselessly get out of the way—which Cowley usually did.

From 1946 until his death in 1989 at the age of ninety, Cowley served as a part-time literary adviser to Viking Press, and now, in an act of tribute, the firm has issued a Portable of Cowley's own work, containing excerpts from the autobiographical *Exile's Return* (1934), a group of his best essays, some inoffensive verse, and a batch of letters. The editing by Donald W. Faulkner (no relation, I assume) is uneven: fine for the literary portions, poor with regard to Cowley's intellectual-political career.

Faulkner writes in his introduction that Cowley "suffered mightily for positions he had taken on international fronts regarding both the Spanish Revolution and the ongoing Russian Revolution." Which positions? Faulkner does not say. Was Cowley's suffering warranted or due to the low revenge of enemies? Faulkner does not say. Only later, in an editorial note, does he remark that Cowley had been "an ardent supporter of the Soviet 'experiment' and an equally ardent supporter of Stalin. Cowley parted company with the Soviet line a little too late for [Edmund] Wilson and others' comfort . . ." By page 467 we learn that in 1938 Wilson sent "a cranky letter accusing Cowley of ignorance in politics."

This will not do. It reflects perhaps the feeling of a literary man that politics is contemptible or unworthy of serious note, perhaps the feeling of a friend eager to protect a writer's reputation, perhaps (though by 1990 this is hard to believe) a mere lack of historical knowledge. During the 1930s Cowley was not just "an ardent supporter of the Soviet 'experiment.' " He played an influential role in American cultural life, and a central role in the political debates that raged among intellectuals. As literary editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC, he was able to use its back pages to advance pro-Stalinist views. Among the tiny group of anti-Stalinist left-wing intellectuals there was a strong feeling—strong is putting it mildly—that Cowley was a dangerous opponent, because he defended the fellow-traveling line with greater sophistication and effectiveness than could the Party regulars.

That Cowley broke from fellow-traveling politics in 1940 was to his credit; but to suggest, in Faulkner's rather lofty manner, that it was just a question of who broke a little sooner and who a little later is to trivialize a moral and political issue that has racked our century. Remember that these were the years of terror, the years of the Moscow trials and the Gulag—we didn't use that name then, but we had a pretty good idea of the phenomenon. The first major, and I'd say the most deep-going, battles over Stalinism were fought out in the 1930s, when Cowley's influence was large, and it took a certain moral courage to attack Stalinism in the cultural world. Nor was this some obscure sectarian squabble, interesting only to people in Moscow and Union Square. It entailed matters of fundamental probity; and insofar as participants on both sides claimed to speak from a socialist perspective, it entailed urgent questions—we still have not fully answered them—of what so-

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cialism could or should signify.

As for Edmund Wilson, he certainly could be cranky, but there is nothing especially cranky about his rebuke to Cowley, a rebuke (Faulkner might notice) that charged him with something more than "ignorance in politics":

> You're a great guy [wrote Wilson] to talk about the value of a non-partisan literary review after the way you've been plugging the damned old Stalinist line. . . . (Did you see the interview with Stalin in *Liberty* in which he invokes Peter the Great, Napoleon and even Napoleon the Third . . . and returns a noncommittal answer to a question about an alliance with Hitler?)

By now this is familiar stuff, every columnist dutifully repeats it, but in 1938 we could have used a few more such intellectual "cranks." What I have said about Cowley's career Faulkner could have found in Daniel Aaron's judicious, even sympathetic study *Writers on the Left*. But for whatever reason, Faulkner either does not know it or has chosen not to describe it in a responsible way—with the result, I suspect, that his failures or evasions will evoke excessive attention.

Does it all still matter? All those old disputes, those exhausted passions, those leftist quarrels. I think it does. I think it matters to millions of people still forced to live with the bitter consequences of the politics Cowley supported, and more immediately, it matters if Cowley's career does.

That career began as essentially a literary one. Like other American writers who had lived through the First World War, he spent a few stimulating years in Paris during the early 1920s, getting to know the Surrealists, gaining the friendship of Paul Valéry, and working with such avant-garde literary magazines as *Broom* and *Secession*. "I thank God constantly," he later wrote to his friend Kenneth Burke, "that I have crossed the water. Not that my soul has been transfixed with wonder, but just that I have been drawn out of my fixed orbit . . ." A remark that nicely reveals two sides of Cowley's sensibility: the expatriate of semi-modernist outlook and the stubbornly native American who persisted somewhat comically in calling himself a "country boy."

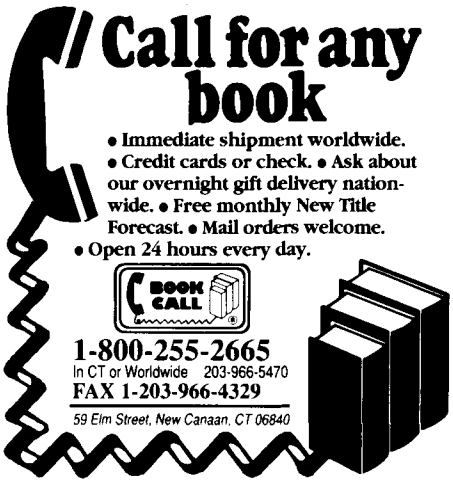
What later brought Cowley to the fellow-traveling cultural milieu was largely a complex of good intentions: sympathy with the victims of the depression, hope for a better society, fear caused by the rise of fascism. (It's especially worth stressing in 1990 that this held true for many people drawn to communism; otherwise that experience would have not constituted so great a political tragedy.) In 1932 Cowley joined with other American writers to visit Harlan County, Kentucky, where a coal miners' strike under Party guidance was floundering. The delegation suffered rough handling from local thugs, with one writer, Waldo Frank, severely beaten. After that, said Cowley, "I knew which side I was on." Yes, but the sides could get badly mixed and the writers taking sides badly mixed up. As Cowley admitted some years later: "I wanted to write honestly, I wanted to do my share in building a just society, and it did not occur to me that those last two aims, both admirable in themselves, might come into conflict."

A few years later Cowley published *Exile's Return*, a charming account of the literary expatriates of the 1920s and their later return to the United States. The book has worn well; it retains its freshness as informal cultural history. It is written in a smooth, even creamy style that enabled Cowley to exploit his gift for evoking moments and places, though it also kept him from, or was a token of his inability to reach, intellectual sharpness. Especially weak are the literary judgments. Never quite at ease with the European modernists, Cowley could write that Eliot, Joyce, and Proust, while "great literary men," "resembled one another in proposing a future as cold as the touch of cold hands." A dull judgment.

Only in later years, after withdrawing from politics, did Cowley find himself as a literary critic. His conceptual powers always remained meager, and Faulkner does him faint service by writing that "with his peer Edmund Wilson" he "was the great 'public critic' of American writing for our century." What Cowley lacked was precisely the capacities Wilson possessed: wide learning, intellectual force, literary range. Could anyone imagine Cowley writing *To the Finland Station* or even *Patriotic Gore*?

Cowley's best criticism was focused on a small group of American writers: Dreiser, Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Cheever. About such writers he could be warmly perceptive. (He was also sympathetic to some younger writers one would have supposed not to his taste, such as Jack Kerouac and Ken Kesey.) The essays that Cowley wrote about these American writers stemmed from strong generational feelings—loyalty to writers who had come through the First World War, those who had shared the pleasures and delusions of the 1920s, and some of those who had plunged into the radicalism of the 1930s. His essays were composed in a pleasing and comfortable style, and his critical voice, shrewdly mild and conversational, seldom rose to exaltation or fell to grief. One sometimes felt about Cowley that his prose suffered from a surplus of moderation and—perhaps because of the moral bruises he carried from the 1930s—that as a writer he was no longer inclined to take chances.

Within these limits, Cowley could be a very fine critic. He had a pleasing sense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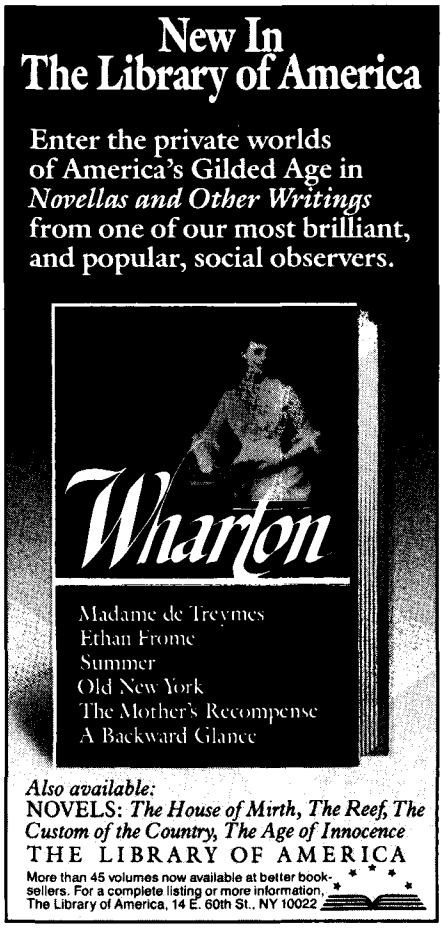
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of solidarity with living writers, not just with "literature" or "the tradition," for he knew how desperately hard it is to write a good poem or novel. He was very adept at capturing a writer's tone of voice, and sometimes mimicking it. He became a virtuoso of atmospherics. What he practiced wasn't exactly biographical criticism, it was an intuitive edging or sliding into a writer's sensibility—criticism, you might say, as secret sharing. This is a rare gift, precious few critics have it, and these days fewer seem to want it.

Here is Cowley on Dreiser:

> His mind was like an attic in an earthquake, full of big trunks that slithered about and popped open one after another, so that he spoke sometimes as a Social Darwinist, sometimes as a Marxist, sometimes almost as a fascist, and sometimes as a sentimental reformer. Always he spoke, though, with an uncalculating candor that gave him a large sort of bumbling dignity.

And here Cowley writes about the almost-forgotten American Naturalists:

> They have hardly a trace of the cynicism that is often charged against them. It is the quietly realistic or classical writers who are likely to be cynics, in the sense of holding a low opinion of life and human beings; that low estimate is so deeply ingrained in them that they never bother to insist on it—for why should they try to make converts in such a hopeless world? The Naturalists are always trying to convert others and themselves, and sometimes they build up new illusions simply to enjoy the pain of stripping them away. It is their feeling of fascinated revulsion toward their subject matter that makes some of the Naturalists hard to read; they seem to be flogging themselves and their audiences like a band of Penitents.

And here Cowley creates a fine image about Hemingway:

> His heroes live in a world that is like a hostile forest, full of unseen dangers, not to mention the nightmares that haunt their sleep. Death spies on them from behind every tree. Their only chance for safety lies in the faithful observance of customs they invent for themselves.

Cowley's best piece of criticism was probably his essay on Faulkner. A few of its remarks seem off, as in his description of Popeye, the small-town thug of *Sanctuary*, as a "compendium of all the hateful qualities that Faulkner assigns to finance capitalism." I doubt that finance capitalism was a significant presence in Faulkner's imagination, and if it was, Popeye is certainly not its representative. Still, the essay was a pioneering entrance into Faulkner's "world," and among the first to honor Faulkner as historical elegist, one of the few American writers endowed with a strong sense of the tragic. And no other critic was as keen as Cowley in detailing Faulkner's "delight" in the weather, the sort of observation more high-powered critics would be likely to miss.

Cowley dropped the stylistic calm that marks his mature criticism on one significant occasion toward the end of his life, and I think the incident is sufficiently interesting to warrant a bit of detail. Cowley's style of calm, I suspect, had come to serve as a defensive reaction against his earlier political self. Even in his best essays there was a strain of inhibition, like that of a person recovering from trauma; part of him, the more combative part, was held in check. All this was a fairly common and understandable response among writers who felt they had been burned by the politics of the 1930s. But now, in a polemical encounter, Cowley found a new—or is it old?—energy of expression.

In *Commentary* in July 1981, Kenneth Lynn, a neoconservative critic, printed a lengthy attack on Cowley, charging that his introduction to *The Portable Hemingway* reflected—oh, the horror of it!—an anti-capitalist bias. In discussing Hemingway's wonderful story "Big Two-Hearted River," said Lynn, Cowley had twisted it into a dark account of a soldier distraught after the First World War, while actually it was just "a sun-drenched, Cezannish picture of a predominantly happy fishing trip."

Three years later, in the Summer 1984 issue of *The Georgia Review*, Cowley printed a bristling reply in which he quoted from a Hemingway letter of August 25, 1948:

> In the first world war, I now see I was hurt very badly: in the body, mind, and spirit, also morally. . . . I was hurt all the way through and I was really spooked at the end. Big Two-Hearted River is a story about a man who is home from the war. But the war is not mentioned.

Citations like these (there are a few others) were decisive for Cowley, since a keen literary intelligence like Hemingway must have known what he wanted to write. In rebuttal, Lynn launched an odious personal attack on Cowley and his "potato face" in *The Georgia Review*, Fall 1984, but then he did make a cogent literary point. Cowley's "wound-theory," wrote Lynn, is supported "solely by statements by Hemingway . . ." and that is not enough. What a writer says retrospectively about his work can often be misleading.

Now comes a curious twist. Together with the exchange between Cowley and Lynn there appeared a letter from Philip Young, author of a keen study of Hemingway. Young wrote that Cowley's introduction to *The Portable Hemingway* "contains no discussion whatever of Hemingway's wound," that the notion appears in his, Young's, book. Evidently Cowley had been tricked by a faulty memory, and Lynn by eagerness to make a polemical point. But in going back to Cowley's introduction, I find that while Young, by a strict reading, is right, there are passages close enough to the "wound-theory" to warrant Lynn's assumption that Cowley held to it and Cowley's assumption that he had written in accordance with it. For example, Cowley wrote: "We notice that Nick Adams [the protagonist of "Big Two-Hearted River"] regards his fishing trip as an escape, either from a nightmare or from realities that have become a nightmare." In the context of the Nick Adams stories as a whole, those "realities" can plausibly be regarded as a trauma induced by the war.

Young made another and stronger point: that the "wound-theory" could be substantiated only by a close analysis of the story, of its style as a reflex of shell shock. Hemingway's style in this story is one of staccato nervousness, severe psychic repression, with a suggestion of some deep, unspecified trouble as the motive behind Nick Adams's return to the countryside. It is a story about an attempted emotional recovery—one is never quite sure how successful—through an immersion in the natural world. Certainly Lynn's notion of a "sun-drenched fishing trip" is ridiculous—tone-deaf, too. Lynn set himself up as a border guard to keep "negative" and "subversive" sentiments out of our Cezannish native grounds. As for Cowley, his essay shows that there is something about having to defend your integrity, even at the age of eighty-five, that makes the juices flow and the prose spring to life.

Literary criticism rarely enjoys a long life, and probably that is as it should be. Much of it is journalism, comment for the day; some gets caught up with aesthetic theories blessed with a short life; and still more is personal opinion, interesting only when it comes from powerful writers. My guess would be that only a small portion of Malcolm Cowley's work will last—say, *Exile's Return* and five or six essays. But when you consider the fate of most critics, is that really so little?

IRVING HOWE is at work on a book about the novel titled *Selected Short Subjects*.

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Cheat's Tale

BY LUC SANTE

London Fields by Martin Amis

(Harmony, 470 pp., $19.95)

The difference between a thin novel and a fat one is more than just a matter of length. From a big book—which can semi-arbitrarily be designated as anything over 400 pages—the reader feels entitled to more, quantitatively: not just more characters, more locations, more romances and death scenes and comic interludes, but more *stuff*, more digressions, arcana, crash courses in diverse subjects. The fat novel must be a miscellany of information, a multitiered box of trinkets and gewgaws. All this stuff should be judiciously arranged, however, in the hollows and contours of a real story, propulsive and engaging.

Martin Amis's *London Fields*, which measures 470 pages stripped, would seem to fill this bill with verve. There is its story: the triangle consisting of low-life Keith Talent, high-born and -minded Guy Clinch, and belle dame sans merci Nicola Six, observed by fourth party and fifth wheel (and first-person narrator) Samson Young. It is propulsive, since we know from page one that the story will end in the murder of Nicola Six, although we don't know whose hand will direct it. It is engaging, since there is ample opportunity to browse among the dominant and recessive traits of Guy and Keith and Samson. (Nicola Six, per tradition, is fated to remain an impenetrable ice queen.)

There are its perquisites: a philosophy of underwear, a manual of darts, a comparative study of London dialects, several stabs at a taxonomy of the English underclass, various à clef japeries at the expense of current English literary personages, a veritable thesaurus of the kiss (the Rosebud, the Pouter, Cousins Touching Tongues, Clash of the Incisors, Anybody's, Lady Macbeth, the Grand-A-Night Hooker, and so on). And there are its ambitions: it is intended to be a satirical portrait of present-day London life, an allegory of existence in the shadow of the Apocalypse, a sort of winged monument to the fallen of both the class war and the war between the sexes, and a large-scale metafictional brain-twister. It's packed with jokes, too.

Somehow, though, all these features and intentions put together add up to a small, rather shrill book. Why should this be? Amis, who to date has written five other, variously satisfying novels—one of them (1984's *Money*) very good—as well as one collection of short stories and two collections of essays, is a gifted joker, an inspired verbal cartoonist with a particular flair for the grotesque, a connoisseur of comic misery, especially comic sexual misery. He is one of those prose stylists who can set up a subject and write the proverbial hell out of it: "like the desolating gaiety of a fundless pediatric hospital (Welcome to the Peter Pan Ward), or like a criminal's cream Rolls-Royce, parked at dusk between a tube station and a flower stall, the eyes of Keith Talent shone with tremendous accommodations made to money."

Amis wields a deadly pen and, one suspects, a deadly tongue, so that one would avoid being on the other side of a restaurant scrap. In the London press he is written about not only as a rising young author but as a ringleader, a social arbiter, an urban public wit of a sort not seen in years. Perhaps Amis felt that these skills and attributes were insufficient, that it was time to write a really important novel, a Big Book not just in size and density, but in stature. And while it could be said that his strongest suits—satire, caricature, apothegms, one-liners, asides—might not be the ideal ones for the task of major-novel construction, it could likewise be pointed out that major novels have been built using just such materials. (*Tristram Shandy* comes to mind.)

But *London Fields* doesn't seem to *want* to be a major novel. The reader can sense its core of gleeful malice throwing off the more self-consciously important of its grafted appurtenances the way a body rejects an ill-matched foreign organ. The book's subject is cheating, primarily. Keith Talent is a *cheat*—always italicized, this word—who pursues every variety of the short con. Guy Clinch is cheating on his wife, pursuing Nicola Six. Nicola is cheating on life by arranging for her own death at the hands of one or another of the besotted men around.

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Samson Young is cheating on the rules of his journalistic task of recording the entwined stories of the other three by (metafictionally) fiddling with their destinies.

Samson is an American, or at least he has come from New York via an apartment exchange ad in *The New York Review of Books*, swapping a crummy walk-up for the vast London flat of a grandiosely successful writer; at the same time, misty allusions are made to an English childhood, and he uses Brit slang terms more often and less self-consciously than American ones. He is dying of some vaguely defined ailment that might be AIDS but sounds more like the traditional movie disease, and his moribund condition is apparently the thing that turns him from a more-or-less journalist into a real Author, godlike and fateful.

Thus he selects the constituents of his triangle from out of the crowd and sets them to work on one another to give him the matter of his book. Meanwhile the news fragments come winging in, dimly: there is a Crisis (always capitalized), the Russians this, the mullahs that, the President's wife some other thing. This obscure tension is presumably supposed to mount. The plot hurtles along like an opera pastiche with cardboard sets, every convention emptied and reinflated, until it crashes to a close with a device, half Pirandello and half O. Henry, that rings so hollow and feels so antiquated that one wants to believe its hollowness and mustiness are deliberate.

There is real desperation in many of these choices. The toying with authorship and voice and point of view and destiny serves no purpose, except as packaging: some backdated flash for the squares, some makeshift complexity for the professors. The world-crisis tease is even less pertinent, merely there to simulate historical significance. (This particular anxiety of the author's is underlined in the wonderfully fatuous note among the front matter in which he discusses his search for a title: one of the candidates was *Millennium*.)

Stripped of such trappings, the book begins to seem more plausible, although it is still way too long. Much of the padding comes from Amis's unstoppable compulsion for shtick. Many of his routines are, in fact, very funny: for example, the first time he uses a baby's gurglings—"War." "Lie." "Oil."—as a dark counterpoint to an adult conversation, or the first time he has illiterate yobboes suddenly begin talking like television sportscasters as they relate the progress of a soccer match (" 'During the first half the Hammers probed down the left flank. Revelling in the space, the speed of Sylvester Drayon was always going to pose problems for the home side's number two. With scant minutes remaining before the half-time whistle, the black winger cut in . . .' "), or the first time he quotes the inspirational passages on heritage from Keith's copy of *Darts: Master the Discipline*:

> Those Pilgrim Fathers are said to have thrown darts while sailing to America in 1620 on the so-called Mayflower. Christ knows how they managed it as they only had a small boat as they were tossed about on the "Atlantic" Ocean. King Arthur was also said to have played a form of darts.

The trouble is that, having scored once with a given routine, Amis feels compelled to repeat the gambit again and again, without at all varying the tone or the nuance or the import. Perhaps it is only fitting, on the other hand, that compulsion should be so enmeshed in the novel's fabric, since virtually every character in it is a certifiable compulsive.

Reduced to essentials, then, the story (now about 250 pages or so in length) is a basic sexual triangle. Keith and Guy are cartoons, to be sure, but they are at least as complex and sympathetic as the more celebrated rabbits and coyotes. Keith is the king of his pub, the local darts phenomenon, a hustler who is always able to extract money from some small-time ploy or other (he has a four-color brochure detailing his legitimate pursuits: "Chauffeur and courier services; Own limousine; Casino consultant; Luxury goods and Celebrity purchases; Darts lessons given; London operative for Ambrosio of Milan, Perfumes and Furs") and then blow it all the next day at the turf accountant's. He is also a low-rent satyr with a long string of hapless, drunken, insane, or underage women scattered all over London. He's not a bad guy, really; he just can't help himself.

Amis clearly enjoyed writing about Keith and detailing his dank, malnourished world of pubs, petty crime, dirty jokes, hit-and-run sex, tabloids, canned lager, scotch eggs, council flats, caseworkers. It is a world where Cockneys and Poles and Rastafarians can seamlessly alternate between conviviality and mutual antagonism, where nobody has ever held down a legitimate job or ever will. Then again, the lifelong unemployment (which may or may not be synonymous with idleness) is what really unites the disparate elements in his landscape. The under, upper, and artist classes all have plenty of time to spend in pubs, morning, noon, and night.

Amis is less interested in the upper class, and Guy, being helplessly noble, is assigned an interestingly terrible family life, with an overbearing American wife and a literal monster of a child, who as an infant assaults and maims his nurses and requires muscular handlers with psycho-ward experience. In their differing ways, both men are obsessed with Nicola, whose job description sounds like something Amis cooked up to bait feminists: she is at once the story's nominal victim and the engineer of men's doom. Oddly enough, she is not altogether unsympathetic herself, principally because she can briefly appear human in the presence of the one man who has any power over her: the narrator, whose power derives from the fact that he is dying and thus is beyond sex. Nicola's vocation is sex, not that she cares much about it per se; what truly interests her is the intricate art of the tease. She is the embodiment of every male fear about women. She is beautiful, intelligent, self-sufficient, disinterested, and she treats men like bugs.

To call the premise thus skeletally outlined mechanical would be to belabor the obvious. It *is* a mechanism, the way a Tom and Jerry escapade is a mechanism, only in this case every pratfall is informed by rich sociological context. It is a panoramic cartoon that takes in a whole world of culture and custom and speech. (Amis, who has a prodigious ear, seems almost totally devoid of a visual sense.) At its best it is wildly entertaining, and the narrator/author's conniving voice engages the reader as a crony—the jokes become inside jokes between him and us. What keeps *London Fields* from being anything more than a cartoon, however, is the complete absence of a heart.

The deadly accurate pinpointing of human weaknesses has no counterweight in acknowledgment of human value. What makes the characters funny is their shortcomings, and what makes them sympathetic is also their shortcomings. The characters all operate from the basest possible motives at all times (except for Guy, but in this, too, he is merely embodying a class joke, as his nobility itself becomes a failing). In a quick read, all this entomological skewering would merely be malicious fun, but in such a long and dense novel it eventually reveals a quality of extreme emotional parsimony, of real, deep-dish cheapness. And this is a flaw that all the cosmetic layers of literary embellishment and current-events tomfoolery cannot ennoble or disguise.

LUC SANTE is the film critic for *Wigwag* and the author of *Low Life*, a book about vice in New York in the nineteenth century, which will be published next spring by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

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Stalking the Truth

BY C. VANN WOODWARD

Race and History Selected Essays 1938-1988 by John Hope Franklin

(Louisiana State University Press, 450 pp., $29.95)

Among the twenty-seven essays that John Hope Franklin chose for this book from a half century of writings, only one is overtly autobiographical. It is engagingly forthright, unpretentious, and richly informative. Given the professional and personal interests of the author and the nature of his subject, however, it would be natural to expect more information of that character. And in this expectation we are not disappointed, for an autobiographical theme underlies many of these pieces. It is unobtrusive and often understated, yet it is one of the most valuable and memorable contributions that this book has to make.

Franklin began life in an all-black village of 200 souls in Oklahoma, where the quality of life was "as low as one can imagine . . . no electricity, running water, or inside plumbing . . . no entertainment or diversion of any kind—no parks, no playgrounds, libraries, or newspapers." When John Hope was six his father went to Tulsa to open a law practice, intending to move his family there as soon as he was established. Within six months of his arrival, however, a "race riot" burned out much of the segregated Negro section of the city, including the place he had contracted to buy for a law office. He practiced in a tent for some months. His family did not join him in Tulsa for four years.

Growing up in the 1920s and 1930s, the youthful Franklin encountered racial segregation in its fullest development. Those were years when white arrogance and brutality took some of its ugliest forms. In this respect, a move from Tulsa to Nashville in 1931 to attend Fisk University did not improve the scene very much. To avoid trouble he rarely went into the city, and never alone. While he was at Fisk, a white gang took a black youth from a university-owned house on the edge of the campus and lynched him. At Harvard for graduate training, he took a room with a black family and a job washing dishes for his evening meal. Among faculty and students he found racial bias in various forms. He regarded the course of study as "far from extraordinary," and left as soon as the minimal residence requirements for the doctoral degree were completed in 1939, since he "did not wish to be in Cambridge another day."

Franklin spent the next seventeen years teaching at black colleges in the South, mainly in North Carolina and in the District of Columbia, and doing research in archives all over the South. Coping as best he could with exclusion from hotels, restaurants, and toilets during his scholarly travels (at some archives and libraries he was even assigned segregated work quarters), he put in some of the most creative and productive years of his life, turning out a flow of articles and books on Negro history, including his fine major work, *From Slavery to Freedom*, the first of many editions of which appeared in 1947. In this book he found it necessary "to retell the story of the evolution of the people of the United States in order to place the Negro in his proper relationship and perspective."

These achievements opened opportunities that sent him northward, first as chairman of the history department of fifty-two white historians at Brooklyn College in 1956 and later to the University of Chicago in the same role. But in place of the old walls of segregation, new ones rose around him. In Brooklyn it required "hassles of more than a year" with thirty-odd realtors, numerous banks, and the help of a shrewd lawyer to find a house he was permitted to buy and to finance and to inhabit unmolested. He offers this as an instance of "the rebuffs, the indignities, or the discriminations that many black people suffer."

What effect did such experiences have upon the history he wrote? They undoubtedly sharpened his perceptions and shaped his point of view, not only in writing the history of his own people but in requiring him to revise the history of the country "in order to place the Negro in his proper relationship and perspective." But that was to correct, not to distort, history. Franklin's history is not history with a mission, or with polemics. He was quite ready to defy the white establishment of the history profession, even as a beginner, and to correct errors and distortions—with invariable civility. But he was equally prepared to challenge and correct conventional wisdom and cherished convictions of black colleagues.

One example of the latter is his essay on the "virtually free" slaves of North Carolina. No conviction was more firmly fixed in traditional black history than the unmitigated evil of slavery. Yet here is Franklin with an essay telling us that "every institution has its lights and shadows," that many slaveholders "had sufficient humanity within themselves to treat their human chattel as human beings." State records, he finds, are "literally filled with the accounts of slaves whose bondage was hardly more than nominal," many of whom used their virtual freedom to earn good incomes. One in Chapel Hill made a good thing of writing poems and love letters for college students. Another in the same town earned so much goodwill that 309 students, the president, and many faculty of the university petitioned the legislature to grant the owner's request to free the slave without making him leave the state, as the law required.

In no sense an apology for slavery, this essay is followed by one pointing out that the institution was sustained by force and violence. We are dealing here with a historian who spares no effort in pursuit of the truth, delights in finding it even when he deplores the truth of what he has found, and never thinks of suppressing it on that account. Of several instances, the most striking is Franklin's biography in 1985 of George Washington Williams, "the first historian to write a serious, widely reviewed history of the Negro race." In an essay called "Stalking George Washington Williams," he tells of his astonishment and his elation at discovering the two-volume work of this black historian and his determination to write a biography of the man. The stalking went on for more than forty years, for the record was obscure and fragments were scattered from California to the Congo, from Belgium to Britain.

In his brief life of forty-two years (1849-1891), Williams had fought in two wars, served as pastor of major churches, and become an editor, a columnist, a legislator, and a lawyer, as well as a historian and a world traveler. It had the makings of a story of racial heroism, but Franklin was not out to make heroes. Along with his brilliant achievements, Williams also turned out to be something of an imposter who played fast and loose with the truth, with creditors, and with women.

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That being established from the record, it went right into the biography, the deplorable along with the admirable.

To appreciate the costs of scholarly detachment for a black historian of Franklin's time, one has only to remember that these were years of the civil rights upheaval in all its contradictions and passions: from nonviolence to extreme violence, from racial integration to racial resegregation, from black-and-white-together to Black Power, and on to black racism, anti-Semitism, and license to hate. There came the moment when Stokely Carmichael could declare that his mission was to teach his people "how to dismantle America, how to destory it." Another slogan had it: "No more patience. No more thought. No more reason."

"I could not have avoided being a social activist even if I wanted to," writes Franklin. Of course, there were several varieties of activism. His took the form of expert witness in court and Congress, research and writing for the NAACP legal counsel in the *Brown* case on school segregation, and participation in some of the marches and demonstrations. The varieties of activism he did not practice or endorse were the sort exemplified by Carmichael, Huey P. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Black Muslims, and Black Panthers. With the provocations of black bigotry on one side and white bigotry on the other, it is little wonder that Franklin found that for the black historian "the task of remaining calm and objective is indeed a formidable one. There is always the temptation to pollute his scholarship with polemics, diatribes, arguments."

Of the two sources of provocation, those from the white side seem, from this account, to have been the more difficult to resist. Faced with the assumption of inferiority and an attack on their very claim to being scholars, black scholars "were drawn inexorably, irresistably into the field that became known as Negro studies," in which they were "isolated from the assaults of the white scholars," and where they could "work relatively unmolested." This happened, for example, to W. E. B. DuBois, to Carter G. Woodson, and Alain L. Locke, all three with Harvard doctor's degrees. A biologist, for example, felt compelled to write a book titled *The Biology of the Negro*:

> In moving forthrightly in this direction, what had the Negro scholar done? He had, alas, made an institution of the field of Negro studies. He had become the victim of segregation in the field of scholarship in the same way that Negroes in other fields had become victims of segregation. There was the Negro press, the Negro church, Negro business, Negro education, and now Negro scholarship . . .
>
> This was a tragedy. Negro scholarship had foundered on the rocks of racism. It had been detoured by principles of separatism, of segregation. It had become the victim of the view that there was some "mystique" about Negro studies, similar to the view that there was some "mystique" about Negro spirituals which required that a person possess a black skin in order to sing them. This was not scholarship; it was folklore, it was voodoo.

Another American mystique with which blacks in all walks of life had to cope was that of "ethnicity." It applied to other people more temporarily, new immigrants such as the Irish, Germans, or Italians with cultural traits that made them "happier with their own kind." But with Europeans, ethnicity was a way station that "eased the task of assimilation," and for many facilitated their drive to full citizenship:

> For Negroes, however, such was not the case. . . . Negroes did, indeed, preserve their ethnicity! And as they preserved their ethnicity—all too frequently as they looked down the barrel of a policeman's pistol or a militiaman's shotgun—full citizenship seemed many light years away. They saw other ethnic groups pass them by, one by one, and take their places in the Sacred Order of the Star Spangled Banner, the American Protective Association, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan—not always fully assimilated but vehemently opposed to the assimilation of Negroes. . . . This was a land where millions of black human beings whose ancestors had been here for centuries were consistently treated as pariahs and untouchables.

And so by now "ethnicity" had joined such euphemisms as "cultural pluralism" and "inner city." But "even a little child would know what ethnicity had come to mean."

This is a book packed full of hard truths that needed saying. It is our good fortune that they are said so well and in a voice that carries such authority. •

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

out question black Americans' first choice for a national political leader, he would face an uphill battle to become one of our 100 senators in states in which he could run. But, as you say, he wouldn't have to try hard to be elected in Washington, D.C., if it became a state. All other states have white majorities and—surprise, surprise—we currently have no black senators and only one black governor.

Blacks constitute more than ten percent of the U.S. population, roughly the same as the white percentage of the population in South Africa. But in a system that only rewards the majority, significant minorities easily can go unrepresented. Unlike in many of the world's democracies, in the United States if representatives of a party get forty-nine percent of the vote, let alone twenty percent, the party's constituency is out of luck.

Addressing this problem would also be an important vehicle for enlivening politics in this country. Almost certainly it would improve our abysmal voter turnout, as voters would have the incentive of knowing that every vote for a credible party would count toward representation. It also would broaden the range of political debate, currently so pitifully narrow and insubstantial at election time. Needing a majority to be represented, Democrats and Republicans both strive to win over the mythical center rather than take the risk of alienating the majority and directly speaking for "special interests"—which of course as a whole make up the entire population.

ROBERT RICHIE
Olympia, Washington

Post-Orwellian criticism

To the editors:

I know it's hard to write a book that addresses both an academic and a wider intellectual audience. But why does Paul Berman, in his review of my book, *The Politics of Literary Reputation: The Making and Claiming of 'St. George' Orwell*, dismiss it as "postmodern academic fashion" ("The Business of Immortality," March 12)? Why does he present himself as a rebel and me as a faddish academic "man of the moment"? Whatever its faults, my book has nothing to do with "postmodern analysis."

Why does Berman turn my argument that institutional relations play a significant, often neglected, role in making reputations into: "everything is an institutional structure"? Of course that's vulgar. His lengthy counterargument is that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "didn't become a masterpiece" due to historical-institutional factors; "it *was* one." What?! It *became* one—and only in recent decades. Reputations arise not from the intrinsic merit of one's work but from a complexity of factors. Despite its rhetorical power and impact on events, traditionally *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has not—rightly or wrongly—been considered a literary masterpiece.

Berman hopes that "soon the postmodern age will be over, and even John Rodden may feel liberated." No, I'll feel liberated if journalists like Berman let up on the tiresome academic-bashing.

JOHN RODDEN
Austin, Texas

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TRB *continued from page 4*

needs to contain the right ingredients: experiment . . . distant past . . . party situation . . . like many members of generation . . . youthful indiscretion . . . deeply regret. . . .

Where is the line between youthful indiscretion and adult depravity? Is it about age twenty-one? If so, the evolving standard about marijuana use is in odd contrast to the standard of recent years about alcohol consumption. Under the influence of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the federal government has pressured the states into raising the drinking age from eighteen to twenty-one. In America, it seems, it's morally and politically acceptable to be stoned as a minor or drunk as an adult, but not the other way around.

Of course that's not really true. You can't be excused for "experimenting" with marijuana as a college kid today—only twenty years ago. Czar Bennett would like to take away the scholarships of students caught using marijuana. Massachusetts Attorney General James Shannon, age thirty-seven, recently made the boilerplate confession about past "experimentation," but now favors mandatory prison time for even casual users caught twice. He says that his attitude has now changed. Well, as the Church Lady says on *Saturday Night Live* . . . How *convenient*.

And what has really changed since twenty years ago except for the fact that those who were breaking the law then are making the laws now? Marijuana was just as illegal back then as it is today. And there have been no dramatic discoveries about any harmful effects of using it casually. All that has changed is the zeitgeist. Yet young lives will be ruined while older lives proceed unmolested along their placid course.

All these ex-Communist-style confessions-cum-recantations about past drug use leave a bad taste in my mouth. What I'm waiting for is some politician to announce that he used to indulge in marijuana every now and then and that—whatever he thinks about more serious drug problems—he *doesn't* especially regret it. Maybe even that what he really regrets is all the experiments he *didn't* conduct in his youth, perhaps because he was too busy plotting his scramble up the establishment heights. To have used marijuana in the 1960s and 1970s, when everyone was supposed to use marijuana, and to deplore marijuana in the 1980s and 1990s, when everyone is supposed to deplore it, is just a bit too unsurprising.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Talking heads

EVERYONE IS SAYING THAT WASHington is incredibly boring these days, now that we are without the thrills of war, scandal, or riots. There's no denying that the big things are happening elsewhere—in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, South Africa, Latin America—but Washington remains a place where the big things are thought about. Well, OK, not thought about but at least talked about. On the other hand, I have to admit that the most interesting things that have happened to me lately didn't happen here, but in Saddle River, New Jersey, where Richard Nixon lives, and in Madrid, where I debated the world's foremost advocate of drug legalization and survived. So this is a Washington Diarist only because Washington is where I'm writing it.

I'VE CHANGED MY MIND A LOT about Nixon. In 1973 I made it onto his White House enemies list, and it was one of the high points of my youth. This was in the days when people sought the meaning of their lives in political action. To have been in Mississippi in 1964, to have demonstrated against the Vietnam War—this was to have made a difference. And for a journalist to be singled out by Nixon—this was very heaven. Maybe I wasn't Woodward or Bernstein or I. F. Stone or Seymour Hersh, but I was part of that noble band saving humanity from evil—and, what's more, Satan noticed! Alas, it turned out that Nixon hadn't written the enemies list himself, and the list had little to do with anything real: I wasn't wiretapped, followed, or even audited. But whoever compiled it got this much right: I considered Nixon a crook and a threat to democracy, and I thought it a journalist's duty to warn people about him.

I STILL THINK NIXON REPRESented (though he did not begin) a menace that had to be stopped sometime: the White House's use of national security agencies and methods to thwart political foes. But my wife convinced me, after Nixon flew off to San Clemente, that he'd suffered the most terrible loss ever endured by an American politician, that he was no danger to anybody now, and that he ought to be forgiven. So I'm on speaking terms with him these days, as evidenced by a ninety-minute "American Interests" TV special running on PBS May 4 that I taped at Nixon's home and office in New Jersey and for which I have just delivered a shameless plug. Nixon, however, has not yet forgiven "the media." After all these years he remains convinced that the liberal press hasn't stopped hating him since he unmasked Alger Hiss as a former Communist in 1948.

IN WHAT STRUCK ME AS A WILDLY inaccurate reading of history, Nixon wrote in his previous memoirs that "the media are far more powerful than the president in creating public awareness and public attitudes." This flies in the face of Eisenhower's assertion that the press was essentially powerless to hurt a president, and of the experience of any number of presidents—Reagan, for example—who managed to dominate public attitudes in spite of media criticism. Nixon thinks Reagan got off easy because he "was never involved in one of these . . . seminal issues," such as Vietnam. This gives Reagan no credit for violating Beltway wisdom on program cuts, social policy, defense spending, and the "evil empire"—and prevailing.

NIXON CLEARLY ENVIES PRESIdents who can "handle" the press—including George Bush—but he still hasn't a clue about how he might have done it differently. He even acts as though he doesn't understand how he has done it since he set himself on the road to rehabilitation. He thinks he failed by having too few press conferences. In fact, he had too many press conferences, which tended to turn into bear-baiting sessions, and too few interviews and background sessions at which he could have brought his formidable intelligence to bear on individual journalists. (He might even have convinced some of them that getting out of Vietnam too quickly was the wrong thing to do.) More fundamentally, though, he set loose a self-fulfilling process. He believed the press was his enemy, so he treated the press as an enemy, and so the press became his enemy. Paranoids have enemies, all right; they make them. And I think it was paranoia that caused Watergate: Nixon's distrust of other people was transmitted down through the administration and led naturally to the deeds that ended his presidency. At one point in our interview, he seemed to acknowledge this might be so. "It is possible," he said. ". . . I did not intend it to happen."

IN SPAIN, I ENCOUNTERED KID professor Ethan Nadelman of Princeton, age thirty-four, the sober successor to Harvard's Timothy Leary as America's leading advocate of drug legalization—though not of tripping out. Nadelman and I were invited by the Spanish equivalent of the Council on Foreign Relations to have an "American-style" debate on drugs that seemed to startle Eurocrats in the audience for its lack of academic demeanor. Nadelman thinks that the costs of waging war on drugs—in money, lives, foreign policy capital, civil liberties, and urban woe—are far more onerous than the costs of a system whereby drugs (like alcohol and cigarettes) are legal, government-regulated, taxed, and subjected to warning campaigns to discourage use. I think it's inevitable that cheap, pure, available cocaine and crack would lead (as with alcohol and tobacco) to vastly increased use, abuse, and costs in auto accidents, health care spending, child abuse, lost productivity, and wasted lives. Nadelman customarily trounces police chiefs and prosecutors when he debates before U.S. college audiences. But this time our audience was made up of adult public officials from Europe and Latin America, and I think I won. Or maybe my simultaneous translator just beat his simultaneous translator. In any case, the Europeans made it clear that many countries—Italy and Spain, especially—are scared about dramatically increased heroin addiction under the current regime of decriminalization. Italy is moving to make drug possession illegal, and the EEC is at work trying to stop an incipient cocaine invasion from South America. And yet the U.S. "war" is not considered a model program by Europeans. The Latins don't like it much either, if it means alienating peasant growers of coca. There is a compromise policy available: jail traffickers, use the courts to prod users into treatment, spend lots more on education, and, in places like Peru, give land titles to peasants and build roads so that they can plant other crops and get them to market.

PERHAPS THE MOST PROVOCAative single discussion I've had recently, though, wasn't about drugs or Nixon, but about man's spiritual future. The subject was brought up by the head of Spain's Center for International Policy Studies, the Marques of Tamaron. Now that Marxism is a dead idea, he asked, what will replace politics as man's purpose for living? Yuppies have tried self-enrichment, fulfillment through possessions, and that doesn't work, he said. Will people turn to drugs to anesthetize themselves from boredom and despair? Actually, Nadelman and I agreed on an answer to this. The answer is religion or, rather, faith. I predict a reawakening, even in Washington.

MORTON KONDRACKE

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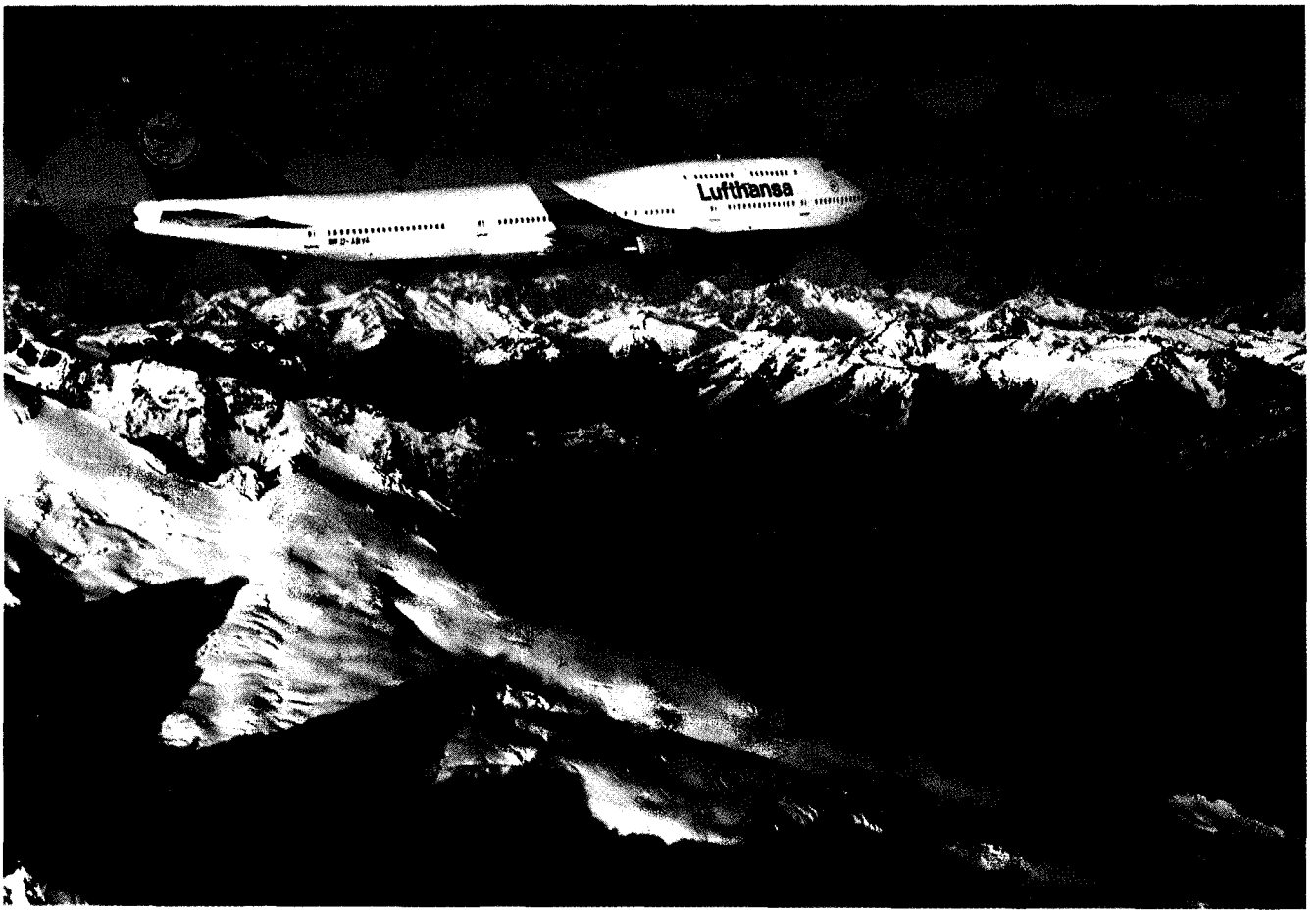

Many domestic airlines have begun to fly across the Atlantic. But an airline used to shorter flights still has much to learn about travelling overseas. On longer flights, passengers expect not just more service, but a different level of service. Food becomes far more important: ordinary airline meals just won't do. The environment has to be equally comfortable for working or sleeping, and cabin attendants must be consistently sensitive to every passenger's needs, for every hour of the trip.

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